

A TREASURY OF  
MYSTIC TERMS





# A TREASURY OF MYSTIC TERMS

PART I  
THE PRINCIPLES OF MYSTICISM



VOLUME 3  
THE DIVINE CREATIVE POWER

JOHN DAVIDSON

SCIENCE OF THE SOUL RESEARCH CENTRE

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EDITED AND LARGELY WRITTEN BY  
JOHN DAVIDSON  
WITH THE HELP OF AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM

*A Treasury of Mystic Terms* has been compiled using the collective skills of an international team of researchers, contributors, assistant editors and readers with a wide variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. All members of the team are spiritual seekers, most of whom have found inspiration and encouragement in the teachings of the mystics of Beas in India. All those involved have given freely to this project, both as a source of inspiration for themselves, and as a way of showing to others the essential unity behind all the apparent variety in religion, philosophy and mysticism.

Everybody has a perspective or a bias – coloured glasses through which they view the world. So although every attempt has been made to handle each entry within its own religious or mystical context, if any particular perspective is detected, it will inevitably be that of the contributors and their perception of mysticism. This does not mean, of course, that the contributors have always been in agreement. The preparation of the *Treasury* has often resulted in healthy debate!

SEE VOLUME 1 FOR THE LIST OF RESEARCHERS AND CONTRIBUTORS





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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE TRANSLATIONS OF THE BUDDHIST *DHAMMAPADA* are founded mostly upon the work of S. Radhakrishnan and Narada Thera.

Many scholarly translations of Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* into European languages have been made from defective Pahlavi translations. The translations here are from the Avestan, and are based largely on the original work of Dr I.R.S. Taraporewala.

Quotations from the *Ādi Granth* are from the English translation of Manmohan Singh.

Most of the translations of the *Bhagavad Gītā* have drawn upon the earlier translation of Swāmī Tapasyānanda.

The sayings of Heraclitus are found only as fragments, quoted in the works of other writers of antiquity. Various scholarly numbering systems exist for these fragments, the system employed here being that used by Philip Wheelwright in *Heraclitus* (Princeton, 1959).

Most of the translations of Rūmī's *Maśnavī* are based upon the work of R.A. Nicholson.

The indigenous Guaraní of eastern Paraguay, made up of three large subgroups – the Mbyá, the Paí Cayuá and the Avá-Chiripá – are described in books and articles by the most notable experts in this field, Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, León Cádogan, Alfred Métraux and Egon Schaden. Most of the information used for the Guaraní mystical terms derives from these scholars' studies of the Mybá and Avá-Chiripá. If a term is general to all indigenous Guaraní, it is labelled (G); if a term is known only to apply to the Avá-Chiripá subgroup, it is labelled (AC).

The transliteration conventions used for all Avá-Chiripá terms are the same as those used in Miguel Alberto Bartolomé's article, *Shamanism and Religion Among the Avá-Chiripá*, which resulted from his field studies in the northeastern region of Paraguay in 1968 and 1969. Bartolomé explains that since Paraguayan Guaraní has an officially recognized written form, he does not use phonetic symbols except the letter 'y' for the sixth guttural vowel.

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Thanks are also due to Dr John Smith, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge University, for making specialist character fonts available to us.

# ABBREVIATIONS

## **General**

<i>cf.</i>	<i>confero</i> (L. I compare), compare
<i>e.g.</i>	<i>exempli gratia</i> (L. for the sake of example), for example
<i>ff.</i>	following (pages, lines, etc.)
<i>i.e.</i>	<i>id est</i> (L. that is), that is (to say), in other words
<i>lit.</i>	literally
p.	page
pp.	pages
<i>viz.</i>	<i>videlicet</i> , from the Latin <i>videre</i> (to see) + <i>licet</i> (it is permissible), used to specify items
►2	See <i>A Treasury of Mystic Terms</i> , Part II

## **Dates**

<i>b.</i>	born
<i>c.</i>	<i>circa</i> , about
<i>d.</i>	died
<i>fl.</i>	flourished

AH	<i>Anno Hegirae</i> , the Islamic dating system, from 622 CE, the Hegira ( <i>al-Hijrah</i> ), the year of Muḥammad's flight to Madīnah
BCE	Before Common Era
CE	Common Era

## **Languages**

A	Arabic
AC	Avá-Chiripá
Am	Aramaic
Av	Avestan
C	Chinese
G	Guaraní
Gk	Greek
H	Hindi
He	Hebrew
J	Japanese

L	Latin
M	Marathi
Md	Mandaean
P	Persian
Pa	Pali
Pu	Punjabi
Pv	Pahlavi
S	Sanskrit
Su	Sumerian
T	Tibetan
U	Urdu

### ***Sources Cited***

See *Bibliography* for full details of published works. Published collections of the writings of Indian Saints have been referred to in source references as below. Other collections published as the *Bānī*, *Granthāvalī*, *Padāvalī* or *Shabdāvalī* of various Indian Saints have been similarly abbreviated.

<i>Charaṇdās Jī kī Bānī</i>	<i>Bānī</i>
<i>Dariyā Sāhib ke chune hue Shabd</i>	<i>Chune hue Shabd</i>
<i>Dhanī Dharamdās Jī kī Shabdāvalī</i>	<i>Shabdāvalī</i>
<i>Kabīr Granthāvalī</i>	<i>Granthāvalī</i>
<i>Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah</i>	<i>Sākhī Sangrah</i>
<i>Keshavdās Jī kī Amīghūnt</i>	<i>Amīghūnt</i>
<i>Kullīyāt-i Bulleh Shāh</i>	<i>Kullīyāt</i>
<i>Mīrā Bṛihat Padāvalī</i>	<i>Bṛihat Padāvalī</i>
<i>Nāmdēv kī Hindī Padāvalī</i>	<i>Padāvalī</i>
<i>Ravidās Darshan</i>	<i>Darshan</i>
<i>Shrī Nāmdēv Gāthā</i>	<i>Gāthā</i>
<i>Tulsīdās kī Bārahmāsī</i>	<i>Bārahmāsī</i>
<i>Tulsī Sāhib Hāthrasvale kī Shabdāvalī</i>	<i>Shabdāvalī</i>

Other texts cited are abbreviated as follows:

AAA	<i>Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles</i> , vol. 2 (translation), ed. & tr. W.R. Wright.
ABE	“Assyrisch-babylonische Mythen und Epen”, transcription & tr. P. Jensen.
ABM	“Die assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlû neu bearbeitet”, G. Meier.
ABT1–2	“Assyrian and Babylonian Religious Texts: Being Prayers, Oracles, Hymns etc., Copied from the Original Tablets Preserved in the British Museum”, 2 parts, J.A. Craig.



AES	<i>Adam and Eve: The Spiritual Symbolism of Genesis and Exodus</i> , S.D. Fohr.
AH1–2	<i>Against Heresies</i> , in <i>The Writings of Irenaeus</i> , 2 vols., tr. A. Roberts and W.H. Rambaud.
AMBF	<i>Aḥādīs-i Maṣnavī</i> , B. Furūzānfar.
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. J.B. Pritchard.
ANT	<i>The Apocryphal New Testament</i> , tr. M.R. James. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
AOT	<i>The Apocryphal Old Testament</i> , ed. H.E.D. Sparks. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
AP1–6	<i>St Augustine on the Psalms</i> , 6 vols., <i>A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church</i> , tr. members of the English Church.
APJ1–2	<i>Ādipurāṇa of Ācārya Jināsena</i> , 2 vols., ed. & tr. Pannalal Jain.
AS	<i>‘Aql-i Surkh</i> , Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī.
ATA	“Anaphora Sancti Timothei Patriarchae Alexandrini”, A. Rücker.
AVG	<i>Ahuna Vairya and the Argument of the Gāthās</i> , I.J.S. Tara-porewala.
AY	<i>Autobiography of a Yogi</i> , Paramhansa Yogananda. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
AYA	<i>The Holy Qur’ān</i> , tr. & commentary ‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Alī.
BC	<i>The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex</i> , tr. Violet MacDermot. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
BLBR	<i>The Book of Legends (Sefer ha-Aggadah): Legends from the Talmud and Midrash</i> , ed. Hayim Nahmun Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, tr. W.G. Braude. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
BLT	<i>The Book of Lieh-Tzu</i> , tr. A.C. Graham. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
BS	<i>Bulleh Shah: The Love-intoxicated Iconoclast</i> , J.R. Puri and T.R. Shangari.
BSB	<i>Bhīkhā Sāhib kī Bānī</i> ; Belvedere Printing Works.
BSBH	<i>Back to the Sources</i> , ed. Barry Holtz. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
BSCD	<i>Bhakti Sāgar</i> , Swāmī Charaṇdās.
CDB1–2	<i>Charaṇdās Jī kī Bānī</i> , 2 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
CDP	<i>The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters</i> , ed. Y.E. Hamilton and H. Cairns.
CDSS	<i>The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English</i> , Geza Vermes. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
CEI	<i>The Concise Encyclop(a)edia of Islam</i> , Cyril Glassé. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
COT	<i>The Compass of Truth (Risala-i-Haq-Numa)</i> , Muhammad Dara Shikoh, tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu.
CPM	<i>The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans</i> , tr. E.S. Drower. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .

CTB	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum.
CTPD	<i>The Complete Text of the Pahlavi Dinkard</i> , 2 Parts, ed. D.M. Madan.
CTT	<i>Chuang Tzu: Taoist Philosopher and Chinese Mystic</i> , tr. Herbert A. Giles. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
CTW	<i>Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings</i> , tr. Burton Watson. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
CWJC1–3	<i>Complete Works of St John of the Cross</i> , 3 vols.-in-one, tr. & ed. E. Allison Peers. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
DAA	<i>The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle</i> , tr. G. Phillips.
DBB	<i>Dayābāi kī Bānī</i> ; Belvedere Printing Works.
DDB1–2	<i>Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī</i> , 2 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
DDS	<i>Dhanī Dharamdās Jī kī Shabdāvalī</i> ; Belvedere Printing Works.
DES	<i>Dictionnaire des Symboles</i> , ed. Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant.
DF	<i>Divine Flashes</i> , Fakhruddin 'Iraqi, tr. W.C. Chittick and P.L. Wilson.
DG1–2	<i>Dariyā Granthāvalī</i> , 2 vols., D.B. Shāstrī.
DHA	<i>Dīvān-i Khwājah Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī</i> , ed. Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Anjavī Shīrāzī.
DHI1–4	<i>A Dictionary of the History of Ideas</i> , 4 vols., ed. Philip P. Weiner.
DHM	<i>Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ</i> ; Malik Ghulām Muḥammad & Sons.
DHWC	<i>The Dīvān-i-Ḥāfiẓ</i> , 2 vols., Khwāja Shamsu-d-Dīn Muḥammad-i-Ḥāfiẓ-i-Shīrāzī, tr. H. Wilberforce Clarke.
DIH	<i>Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ</i> , ed. Qāzi Sajjād Ḥusayn.
DL	<i>Divine Light</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
DML	<i>Dīwān Malkuta 'Laita</i> , Bodleian Library MS. DC34 (An illustrated, Mandaean secret initiation text).
DNB	<i>Dīvān-i Niyāz Barelvī</i> , Anwār al-Ḥasan.
DP1–4	<i>The Dialogues of Plato</i> , 4 vols., tr. B. Jowett.
DSC	<i>Dariyā Sāhib (Bihārvāle) ke chune hue Shabd</i> ; Belvedere Printing Works.
DSSB	<i>Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar</i> , K.N. Upadhyaya.
DSTR	<i>Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz</i> , Rūmī; Munshi Naval Kishore Press.
DSZ	<i>The Divine Songs of Zarathustra</i> , I.J.S. Taraporewala.
DYD	<i>Dariyā Yoga Darshan</i> , Ramman Dās.
ECM	<i>Epictetus: The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, the Manual, and Fragments</i> , 2 vols., tr. W.A. Oldfather.
EG	<i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> , N.K. Sandars.
EGT	<i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> , R.C. Thompson.
EHL	<i>Empedocles</i> , Helle Lambridis. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
EJCD	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i> , CD-ROM.
ESCN	<i>S. Ephraemi Syri Carmina Nisibena</i> , G.S. Bickell.
ESR	<i>S. Ephraemi Syri, Rabulae episcopi Edesseni, Balaei aliorumque Opera selecta</i> , ed. J. Josephus Overbeck.

FCWP	<i>Fools Crow: Wisdom and Power</i> , Thomas E. Mails. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
FFF	<i>Fragments of a Faith Forgotten</i> , G.R.S. Mead.
FL	<i>The Fire of Love and the Mending of Life or the Rule of Living</i> , Richard Rolle, tr. R. Misyn, ed. R. Harvey.
FLI	<i>Farhang-i Lughāt va-Iṣṭilāḥāt va-Ta'bīrāt-i 'Irfānī</i> , Sayyid Ja'far Sajjādi.
FLTM1–9	<i>Farhang-i Lughāt va-Ta'bīrāt-i Maṣnavī</i> , 9 vols., Ṣādiq Gawharīn.
FN1–2	<i>The Fihrist of al-Nadīm</i> , 2 vols., tr. B. Dodge.
FNI1–15	<i>Farhang-i Nūrbakhsh: Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Taṣawwuf</i> , 15 vols., Javād Nūrbakhsh.
FRN	<i>The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan</i> , tr. Judah Goldin.
FRP	<i>From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation</i> , F.M. Cornford.
GCI	<i>A Gallery of Chinese Immortals: Selected Biographies</i> , tr. Lionel Giles.
GGs	<i>Guzīdah-i 'i Ghazalīyat-i Shams (Selected Ghazals of Shams)</i> , Jalaluddin of Balkh (Rūmī), selected by M.R.S. Kadkani.
GJB	<i>The Gnostic John the Baptizer: Selections from the Mandaean John-Book</i> , G.R.S. Mead.
GMU	<i>Geburt und Entsendung des manichäischen Urmenschen</i> , W.B. Henning.
GPJ	<i>Gabriel's Palace: Jewish Mystical Tales</i> , selected and retold by Howard Schwartz. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
GR	<i>Majmū'ah-i 'Āsār-i Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistarī: Gulshan-i Rāz, Sa'ādat-i Nāmāh, Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn, Mir'āt al-Muḥaqqiqīn, Maratīb al-'arīfīn</i> , ed. Ṣamad Muwaḥḥid.
GS	<i>The Gnostic Scriptures</i> , Bentley Layton.
GSBM	<i>Ginzā der Schatz oder das grosse Buch der Mandäer</i> , M. Lidzbarski.
GSR	<i>Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Texts from Central Asia</i> , tr. H-J. Klimkeit. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
GSS	<i>Gurmat Sār</i> , Mahārāj Sawan Singh.
GT	<i>The Gospel of Truth</i> , K. Grobel.
GVM	<i>The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God</i> , G. Widengren. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
GZ	<i>The Gospel of Zarathustra</i> , tr. & ed. by Duncan Greenlees.
HAG	<i>Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings that Contain Religious, or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus</i> , ed. & tr. Walter Scott.
HB	<i>History of Bal'amī</i> , Bal'amī; cited in <i>FLTM1</i> .
HMV	<i>W.B. Henning Memorial Volume</i> , ed. Mary Boyce and Ilya Gershevitch.
HOB	<i>Ḥayyei 'Olam ha-Ba (Life of the Future World)</i> , Abraham Abulafia.

- HPW *Heraclitus*, P. Wheelwright. See *Acknowledgements*.
- HQSA *The Holy Qur'ān: English Translation of the Meaning and Commentary*; Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.
- HR2 *Handschriften-Reste in Estrangelo-Schrift aus Turfan, Chinesisch-Turkistan II*, F.W.K. Müller.
- HS *The Hymn of the Soul: Contained in the Syriac Acts of Thomas*, ed. & tr. A.A. Bevan.
- HSB *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, tr. M. Muhsin Khan; [www.islamworld.net/#hadith](http://www.islamworld.net/#hadith). See *Acknowledgements*.
- HSC *The Heritage of Sufism*, 3 vols., Leonard Lewisohn; vol. 1: *Classical Persian Sufism from its Origins to Rumi*. See *Acknowledgements*.
- HVJM *History and Variety of Jewish Meditation*, Mark Verman.
- HVP *Commentary of Hierocles on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras*, A. Dacier, tr. N. Rowe.
- HWP *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell.
- HYP *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, tr. Pancham Singh.
- IADS1–2 *Isaaci Antiochi, Doctoris Syrorum, Opera Omnia*, 2 vols., G.S. Bickell.
- IAP *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*, A.H. Armstrong.
- IK *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, ed. M. Molé.
- ILP *Iamblichus' Life of Pythagoras or Pythagoric Life*, Thomas Taylor.
- ISQ *Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Ṣūfīyah: An Appendix to Sharḥ-i Manāẓīl al-Sārīn*, 'Abd al-Razzāq Qāshānī.
- IW *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*, W.C. Chittick.
- JA *Joseph and Asenath*, E.W. Brooks.
- JB *The Jerusalem Bible* (1966). See *Acknowledgements*.
- JCL *The CD-ROM Judaic Classics Library (The Soncino Talmud, The Soncino Midrash Rabbah, The Soncino Zohar, The Bible)*; Institute for Computers in Jewish Life & Davka Corporation.
- JM *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, M. Lidzbarski (German Translation).
- JMM *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, M. Lidzbarski (Mandaean Text).
- JPS *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*, 2 vols.; Jewish Publication Society of America. See *Acknowledgements*.
- JS1–2 *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages* (vol. 1) and *Jewish Spirituality: From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present* (vol. 2), ed. Arthur Green.
- KA1–10 *Kashf al-Asrār va-'Uddat al-Abrār*, 10 vols., Abū al-Faẓl Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, ed. 'Alī Aṣghar Ḥikmat.

KB	<i>The Jerusalem Bible</i> , English text rev. & ed. Harold Fisch; Koren Publishers. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
KBS	<i>Kullīyāt-i Bulleh Shāh</i> , Faqīr Muḥammad.
KDA	<i>Keshavdās Jī kī Amīghūnt</i> ; Belvedere Printing Works.
KDS1–2	<i>Kullīyāt-i Dīvān-i Shams: Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Mashhūr bi Maulavī</i> , 2 vols., B. Furūzānfar.
KF	<i>Kitāb al-Fihrist</i> , al-Nadīm, ed. G. Flügel.
KG	<i>Kabīr Granthāvalī</i> , ed. Shyām Sundardās.
KHI	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shaykh Fakhr al-dīn Ibrāhīm Hamadānī ‘Irāqī</i> , ed. Sa‘īd Nafīsī.
KI	<i>The Koran Interpreted</i> , 2 vols., tr. A.J. Arberry. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
KIF	<i>Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn</i> (A Dictionary of the Technical Terms used in the Sciences of the Musalmans), Muḥammad ‘Alā ibn ‘Alī al-Tahānavī, ed. Mawlavī Muḥammad Wajīh <i>et al.</i>
KJV	<i>The Authorized Version of the Bible (The King James Bible)</i> [1611]. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
KKT	<i>Kitāb-i Kāmil al-Tavārīkh</i> , Ibn-i Aṣīr; cited in <i>FLTM1</i> .
KNP	<i>Kabbalah: New Perspectives</i> , Moshe Idel.
KOT	<i>The Kephalaia of the Teacher: The Edited Coptic Manichaean Texts in Translation with Commentry</i> , Iain Gardner. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
KSA	<i>Akhrāvatī: Kabīr Sahab kā Pūrā Granth</i> ; Belvedere Printing Works.
KSD1–10	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shams yā Dīvān-i Kabīr (Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz)</i> , 10 vols., ed. B. Furūzānfar.
KSS	<i>Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah</i> ; Belvedere Printing Works.
KSS1–4	<i>Kabīr Sāhib kī Shabdāvalī</i> , 4 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
KTL	<i>The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion</i> , G. Widengren.
KWGN	<i>Kabir: The Weaver of God’s Name</i> , V.K.Sethi.
KWJM	<i>Kabbalah: The Way of the Jewish Mystic</i> , Perle Epstein.
LB	<i>Legends of the Bible</i> , Louis Ginzberg, tr. from German, Henrietta Szold. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
LBHS	<i>The Life of Blessed Henry Suso</i> , Henry Suso, tr. T.F. Knox.
LJCD	<i>Legends of the Jews</i> (CD-ROM), Louis Ginzberg. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
LS	<i>Leben und Schriften</i> , Heinrich Suso, ed. M. Diepenbrock.
LSMH	“Lower (Second?) Section of the Manichaean Hymns”, tr. Tsui Chi. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
LTTN	<i>Lao Tzu: Text, Notes and Comments</i> , Ch’en Ku-ying, tr. & adapted Rhett Y.W. Young and Roger T. Ames.

- MAA “The Mythological Acts of the Apostles”, A.S. Lewis.  
 MBB *Ein Manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*, W.B. Henning.  
 MBP1–2 *Mīrā Bṛihat Padāvalī*, 2 vols.; Rājasthān Oriental Research Institute.  
 MBS *Mīrābāī kī Shabdāvalī*; Belvedere Printing Works.  
 MDL *Mira: The Divine Lover*, V.K. Sethi.  
 MEM “Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaeism”, G. Widengren. See *Acknowledgements*.  
 MF *Mani*, G. Flügel.  
 MGK *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, Marmaduke Pickthall.  
 MH “Ein Manichäisches Henochbuch”, W.B. Henning.  
 MHCP *The Manichaean Hymn-Cycles in Parthian*, M. Boyce. See *Acknowledgements*.  
 MJR1–8 *The Mathnawī of Jalālu’ddīn Rūmī*, 8 vols., ed. & tr. with notes & commentary R.A. Nicholson. See *Acknowledgements*.  
 MKAK *Meditation and the Kabbalah*, Aryeh Kaplan. See *Acknowledgements*.  
 ML *Manichaean Literature*, J.P. Asmussen. See *Acknowledgements*.  
 MM *Mani and Manichaeism*, G. Widengren.  
 MM1–3 “Mitteliranische Manichaica aus Chinesisch-Turkestan”, 3 vols., F.C. Andreas and W.B. Henning.  
 MMM1–6 *Mašnavī Mawlvī Ma’navī*, 6 vols., Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī.  
 MMS *Sri Guru Granth Sahib: English and Punjabi Translation*, 8 vols., tr. Manmohan Singh.  
 MP *Muhammads People: A Tale by Anthology: A Mosaic Translation*, Eric Schroeder.  
 MPB *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, Part II, ed. & tr. C.R.C. Allbery. See *Acknowledgements*.  
 MR1–6 *Mašnavī Rūmī*, 6 vols., ed. Qaṣī Sajjād Husayn.  
 MRS *The Mythology of All Races: Semitic*, vol. 5, S.H. Langdon.  
 MS *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness*, E. Underhill.  
 MSP1–2 *Mysticism: The Spiritual Path*, 2 vols., Lekh Raj Puri.  
 MTJM *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Gershom G. Scholem.  
 MTP “The Manichaean-Turkic Poethi-Book”, L.V. Clark.  
 NHS11 *Nag Hammadi Studies XI: Nag Hammadi Codices V,2–5 and VI*, ed. Douglas M. Parrott. See *Acknowledgements*.  
 NHS15 *Nag Hammadi Studies XV: Nag Hammadi Codices IX and X*, ed. Birger A. Pearson. See *Acknowledgements*.  
 NHS20 *Nag Hammadi Studies XX: Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, vol. 1, ed. Bentley Layton. See *Acknowledgements*.  
 NHS21 *Nag Hammadi Studies XXI: Nag Hammadi Codex II,2–7*, vol. 2, ed. Bentley Layton. See *Acknowledgements*.



NHS22	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies XXII: Nag Hammadi Codex I (the Jung Codex)</i> , vol. 1, ed. Harold W. Attridge. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
NHS26	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies XXVI: Nag Hammadi Codex III,5, The Dialogue of the Saviour</i> , ed. Stephen Emmel. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
NHS28	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies XXVIII: Nag Hammadi Codices XI, XII, XIII</i> , ed. Charles W. Hedrick. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
NHS30	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies XXX: Nag Hammadi Codex VII, XIII</i> , ed. Birger A. Pearson. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
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NHS33	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies XXXIII: Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II,1, III,1, and IV,1 with BG 8502,2</i> , ed. M. Waldstein and Frederik Wisse. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
NHS4	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies IV: Nag Hammadi Codices III,2 and IV,2, The Gospel of the Egyptians</i> , ed. Alexander Böhlig and Frederik Wisse. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
NRO	“Un nouveau roi d’our”, M.F. Thureau-Dangin.
OCM	<i>The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys</i> , Andrew Louth. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
OG	<i>The Other Gospels</i> , ed. R. Cameron.
OPJG	<i>The Origin of the Prologue to St John’s Gospel</i> , J.R. Harris.
OTP1–2	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> , 2 vols., ed. J.H. Charlesworth. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
P	<i>Philebus</i> , Plato, tr. R.A.H. Waterfield.
P1–161	<i>Patrologia Greco-Latina</i> , 161 vols., J.-P. Migne.
PAC1–2	<i>The Philosophers: An Alternative Concept of Greek Philosophy in Light of Eastern Wisdom and Modern Science</i> , 2 parts, T.A. Richman. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
PAH	“Some Parthian Abecedarian Hymns”, M. Boyce.
PB	<i>The Prayer Book: Weekday, Sabbath and Festival</i> , including <i>Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers)</i> , tr. Ben Zion Bokser. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
PCT1–4	<i>The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth</i> , 4 vols., tr. & ed. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware.
PCW1–10	<i>Philo</i> , 10 vols., tr. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
PDS	<i>Plato: The Last Days of Socrates</i> , tr. Hugh Tredennick and Harold Tarrant.
PEA	<i>Plato: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus</i> , tr. H.N. Fowler.
PEC	<i>Plotinus (The Enneads)</i> , tr. Stephen MacKenna.

PEP	<i>Plotinus: The Enneads</i> , tr. Stephen MacKenna, abridged John Dillon. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
PL	<i>Pythagoras: A Life</i> , P. Gorman.
PM1–5	<i>Philosophy of the Masters</i> , 5 vols., Huzur Maharaj Sawan Singh.
PMDS	<i>Prem Mūl</i> , Dariyā Sāhib, Hindi ms., tr. in <i>Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar</i> , K.N. Upadhyaya.
PNC	<i>A Pair of Naṣoraeen Commentaries (Two Priestly Documents): The Great “First World” and the Lesser “First World”</i> , tr. E.S. Drower. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
POM	<i>The Path of the Masters</i> , Julian Johnson.
PP	“A Pahlavi Poem”, W.B. Henning.
PPG	<i>Plato: Phaedo</i> , tr. D. Gallop.
PPI1–2	<i>The Philosophy of Plotinus</i> , 2 vols., tr. W.R. Inge.
PS	<i>Pistis Sophia</i> , tr. Violet MacDermot.
PSB1–3	<i>Paltū Sāhib kī Bānī</i> , 3 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
PSGG	<i>Pistis Sophia: A Gnostic Gospel</i> , G.R.S. Mead.
PSR	<i>The Persian Šūfis</i> , Cyprian Rice.
QAL	<i>al-Qur’an</i> , tr. Syed Abdul Latif.
RAH	<i>Refutation of All Heresies</i> , Hippolytus, tr. S.D.F. Salmond.
RD	<i>Ravidās Darshan</i> , ed. Achārya Prithvī Singh Āzād.
RISA	<i>The Royal Inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad</i> , G. Barton.
RLI	<i>Rīsālah-yi Lama’āt va-Rīsālah-yi Iṣṭilāḥāt</i> , Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī, ed. Javād-i Nūrbakhsh.
RMM	<i>The Revelations of Mechthild of Magdeburg</i> , tr. L. Menzies.
RMP	<i>A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian</i> , M. Boyce.
RN	<i>Ephraim Syrus: The Repentance of Nineveh: A Metrical Homily on the Mission of Jonah</i> , tr. H. Burgess.
RSV	<i>The Revised Standard Version</i> (1952).
SA	<i>The Secret Adam: A Study of Naṣoraeen Gnosis</i> , E.S. Drower. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
SAC	“Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá”, Miguel A. Bartolomé. See <i>Acknowledgements</i> .
SAHA	<i>Shulḥan ‘Arukh ha-Ari</i> , Ḥayyim Vital.
SB	<i>Sar Bachan</i> , Soami Ji Maharaj (Swami Shiv Dayal Singh).
SBB	<i>Sahajobāī kī Bānī</i> ; Belvedere Printing Works.
SBE	<i>Sultan Bahu</i> , J.R. Puri and K.S. Khak.
SBP	<i>Sār Bachan Chhand-Band (Sār Bachan Poetry)</i> , Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh.
SBPL	<i>Sumerian and Babylonian Psalms</i> , S.H. Langdon.
SBS1–2	<i>Sant Bānī Sangrah</i> , 2 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
SBSU	<i>Sā’īn Bulleh Shāh</i> ; Radha Soami Satsang Beas (Urdu).
SBU	<i>Ḥaẓrat Sulṭān Bāhū</i> ; Radha Soami Satsang Beas (Urdu).
SCC	<i>On Sophistical Refutations, On Coming-to-Be and Passing-</i>



- Away, and *On the Cosmos*, Aristotle, tr. E.M. Forster and D.J. Furley.
- SCMP *Studies in the Coptic Manichaean Psalm-Book*, T. Säve-Söderbergh.
- SD1–2 *Spiritual Discourses*, 2 vols., Maharaj Charan Singh.
- SIM *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, R.A. Nicholson. See *Acknowledgements*.
- SK4 *Sha‘arei Kedushah*, Part 4, Ḥayyim Vital.
- SKB *Santon kī Bānī*; Radha Soami Satsang Beas.
- SL *Spiritual Letters*, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji (1998 edn.).
- SLW *Sumerian Literature: A Preliminary Survey of the Oldest Literature in the World*, S.N. Kramer.
- SMIK1–13 *The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, 13 vols., Hazrat Inayat Khan.
- SMS *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Development in the Third Millennium BC*, S.N. Kramer.
- SNG *Shrī Nāmdev Gāthā*; Government of Maharashtra (Marathi).
- SNP1–2 *Sant Nāmdev kī Hindi Padāvalī*, 2 vols., ed. Bhagirath Misra and Rājnarayan Maurya.
- SPK *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*, William C. Chittick.
- SPL *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rūmī*, William C. Chittick. See *Acknowledgements*.
- SSE1–15 *Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology*, 15 vols., Javad Nurbakhsh, tr. Terry Graham *et al.* See *Acknowledgements*.
- SSM1–3 *Studies of the Spanish Mystics*, 3 vols., E. Allison Peers.
- SSV *Siva Samhita*, tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu. See *Acknowledgements*.
- STG *Shrī Tukārām Bāvāñchyā Abhangāñchī Gāthā*, ed. Shrī P.M. Lāḍ.
- SVS “The Amarna Tablet”, O. Schroeder.
- TAB1–2 *Textes religieux assyriens et babyloniens*, F. Martin, 2 vols.
- TAT *Taṣawwuf va-Adabīyāt-i Taṣawwuf*, including *Mir’āt-i ‘Ushshāq* (an anonymous glossary of Sufi terms), Y.E. Bertels, tr. from Russian into Persian by Sirus Izadi.
- TCK “The Three-Character Rhymed Classic on the Ka‘bah (the *Cube of Heaven*)”, Ma Fu-ch’u, tr. Peter Hobson.
- TDB *Tulsīdās Jī kī Bārahmāsī*, Shrī Goswāmī Tulsīdās Jī.
- TGH1–3 *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*, 3 vols., G.R.S. Mead.
- TMU *Thirty Minor Upaniṣads*, tr. by K. Narayanasvami Aiyar.
- TQH *Tamhīdāt*, ‘Ayn al-Quḍat Hamadānī, ed. Afif Osseiran.
- TSH1–2 *Tulsī Sāhib Hāthrasvāle kī Shabdāvalī*, 2 vols.; Belvedere Printing Works.
- TTQ *The Thousand and Twelve Questions (Alf Trisar Šuialia): A*

- Mandaean Text edited in Transliteration and Translation*, E.S. Drower. See *Acknowledgements*.
- TTT1–6 “Türkische Turfan-Texte”, 6 parts, W. Bang and A. von Gabain.
- TYN *The New Testament*, tr. William Tyndale.
- UWOT *The Uncanonical Writings of the Old Testament Found in the Armenian mss. of the Library of St Lazarus*, tr. J. Issaverdens.
- VE *The Vedic Experience*, Raimundo Panikkar. See *Acknowledgements*.
- VEGA *Virgil: Eclogues, Georgias, Aeneid I–VI*, tr. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G.P. Gould.
- VPL *De vita Pythagorica liber*, Iamblichus, ed. L. Deubner.
- VSB *The Voice of the Silence*, H.P. Blavatsky.
- WCA1–2 *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, 2 vols., tr. W. Wilson.
- WJMA *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, tr. M. Dods.
- WLT *The Wisdom of Laotse*, tr. Lin Yutang. See *Acknowledgements*.
- WM *Western Mysticism: The Teachings of Sts Augustine, Gregory and Bernard on Contemplation and the Contemplative Life*, C. Butler.
- WPJ1–4 *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, 4 vols., tr. C.D. Yonge.
- WS1–7 *Woodbrooke Studies: Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic and Garshuni*, 7 vols., ed. & tr. A. Mingana.
- WZ1–3 *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, 3 vols., arranged by Fischel Lachower and Isaiah Tishby. See *Acknowledgements*.
- YD *Yuen Dao: Tracing Dao to its Source*, tr. D.C. Lau and Roger T. Ames.
- YU *The Yoga Upaniṣads*, tr. T.R. S’rīnivāsa Ayyaṅgār, ed. Paṇḍit S. Subrahmaṇya S’āstrī.
- ZM *Zoroastrian Morals*, I.J.S. Taraporewala, contributed to *Encyclopedia of Morals*, ed. Vergilius Ferm.
- ZSS1–5 *The Zohar*, 5 vols., tr. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon.

# THE DIVINE CREATIVE POWER





### 3.1 THE CREATIVE POWER

THERE ARE FEW MYSTIC REALITIES that have been so frequently and so consistently described as God's creative Power. Mystics of many nations and religions have said that the creation is God's emanation; that the oneness of God becomes the multiplicity of creation through the dynamic, ever present activity of this divine Power. Through this primal outpouring, God has created and continually maintains, supports and administers His creation. It is the link between the creation and God. The continuous movement, order and intelligence in creation is a manifestation of the workings of this primal, divine Power or Vibration.

From man's point of view, the creative Power not only provides his link with God, but also the path of his return to the Divine; for one of the continuous refrains throughout mystic literature is that this Power can be heard as heavenly sound or music and can be seen as a divine light or radiance on the inner planes of creation. It is by this means that the soul returns to God, carried blissfully upward on a beam of celestial glory. Many of the names for this Power reflect not only its audibility, but also the captivating sweetness of its music.

Over the course of time, the divine Power has been given thousands of names in different languages, some of which are given here. The size of this section in relationship to others is an indication of the great importance mystics have ascribed to it. Many descriptions of the supreme Lord, such as eternal, immortal and so on, are also used for this Power; and many terms for it are apparent conundrums such as the unspoken Language, the unutterable Word, the silent Music, and so forth.

Terms that specifically relate to the music of the creative Power are considered in Section 3.II.

**KEY ENTRIES:** Āb-i Ḥayāt, anāhata, Bread, Breath of God, Life Stream, Living Water, Logos, Nāda, Nām, Shabd, Sound, Sraosha, Tree of Life, Vohu Manō, Wisdom, Word.



**āb** (P) *Lit.* water; synonymous with the Arabic, *mā'*; figuratively, in Sufi terminology, the grace and bounty of the Lord; the Reality for which the soul thirsts; the essence of life; the primal or uncreated substance of existence; the spiritual current flowing in all things; the divine creative power. The creation is understood as a projection arising like waves from this water. Metaphorically, Sufis regard *āb* as the Being (God), and the waves as His projections. Since it is common to all living beings on earth, *āb* is the substance necessary for existence, without which no life can be maintained on this plane.

Water (*āb*) serves as an image for the divine Reality, and Sufis have frequently used the imagery of a Sea for the oceanic vastness and all-encompassing oneness and love of the Divine. Multiplicity is of forms, not the divine Essence; even so, the waves (the forms) are not separate from the water of the Sea (the Essence):

Though innumerable are the waves produced  
from the water (*āb*) of the sea,  
multiplicity is in the waves;  
They are naught but water (*āb*).

*Maghribī, Dīvān, in FNI4 p.25*

Rūmī points out that the human body is like a “jug” that has the capacity to hold the “water” of the divine Sea, but instead holds the “briny water (*āb*) of our senses”:

What is that jug? Our confined body:  
within it is the briny water (*āb*) of our senses....  
'Tis a jug with five spouts, the five senses:  
Keep this water (*āb*) pure from every filth,  
that there may be from this jug a passage to the sea;  
And that my jug may assume the nature of the sea,  
so that when you carry it as a gift to the King,  
the King may find it pure, and be its purchaser;  
After that, its water (*āb*) will become without end:  
a hundred worlds will be filled from my jug.  
Stop up its spouts,  
and keep it filled from the jar of Reality:  
God said, “Close your eyes to vain desire.”

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:2708, 2710–14, MJR2 p.147*

As Rūmī summarizes elsewhere:

Since you have found no faithfulness in the gutter (this world),  
henceforth, take the Water (*Āb*) (that comes) from heaven.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:560; cf. MJR4 p.33*

The thirteenth-century Persian Sufi, 'Irāqī, points out that human beings exist and subsist in God, and yet still seek Him:

Drowned in water (*āb*) are we,  
yet still seeking water (*āb*).  
In union (with God) are we,  
yet unaware of the union.

*'Irāqī, Dīvān 1090, KHI p.124, in FNI4 p.25*

See also: **Waters**.

**ābā' wa-ummahāt** (A), **ābā'-u ummahāt** (P) *Lit.* fathers (*ābā'*) and mothers (*ummahāt*); a Sufi metaphor for the creative forces that emanate from the 'Aql-i Avval (Primal Intelligence, Primal Wisdom) down to the physical plane. The 'Aql-i Avval is also called the First Caused, the first expression of the divine creative impulse. The fourteenth-century Persian Sufi, 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, explains in *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (*The Perfect Man*):

All the intelligences, minds and natures are called fathers (*ābā'*). And the firmaments, heavenly bodies and elements are called mothers (*ummahāt*).

*Nasafī, al-Insān al-Kāmil 11:2, IK p.163*

The Sufis depicted a series of heavens or firmaments (*āsmān*) one below another, with the consciousness operative at each level being called 'intellects', 'intelligences' or 'wisdoms' (*'uqūl*, sg. *'aql*). Similarly, a series of subtle bodies (*ajsām-i laṭīf*, sg. *jism-i laṭīf*), each coarser than the one above, serve as vehicles on each plane, controlled and activated by a series of 'minds' (*nufūs*, sg. *nafs*). Ultimately, the forms of creation are governed by 'natures' (*aṭbā'*, sg. *ṭab'*) and made up of 'elements' (*anāṣīr*, sg. *unṣur*). The firmaments, bodies and elements are the 'mothers'. The intelligences, the minds and the natures are the 'fathers'. Explaining how all the mothers and fathers have been created out of the 'Aql-i Avval, through a process of successive emanation, Nasafī continues:

From the essence of the Primal Intelligence ('Aql-i Avval) have come all emanations, multiplying like ripples on a pool from a central point.



From the essence of Intelligence, its cause, and the relationship which exists between the cause and the effect, arose three states in the Primal Intelligence. From each of these three, an intelligence, a mind and a firmament issued forth. And again from each intelligence, another intelligence was created; from each mind, another mind; and from each firmament, another firmament, and so forth, until each condition reached completion, numbering nine.

*Nasafī, al-Insān al-Kāmil 4:1, IK p.71*

Using the terminology of classical astronomy, Sufis named the firmaments or heavens after the planets, the sun and the moon, the lowest being the firmament of the moon. Nasafī describes the final roles of the “fathers and mothers” in bringing together the elements that make up physical bodies, describing at the same time the descending subtle centres of the human body and their elements:

Then, beneath the firmament of the moon appeared the element fire and the nature of fire, the element air and the nature of air, the element water and nature of water, the element earth and nature of earth. At this point, the role of the fathers and mothers (*ābā'-u ummahāt*) in the incident of creation was final, and the descent complete.... The fathers and mothers (*ābā'-u ummahāt*) are also called ‘singulars’, as they represent the singular or essential forms of created things.

*Nasafī, al-Insān al-Kāmil 4:1, 14:2, IK pp.71, 189*

After the act of creation, the fathers and mothers (*ābā'-u ummahāt*) continued to exist and to carry on their assigned duties concerning the ongoing operation of the creation. Nasafī then continues, explaining that the levels described in the descent through which the creation comes into being are the same levels through which the mystic ascends in returning to the highest level:

As descension has fourteen levels, so too has ascension, with fourteen levels to complete the circle (from Creator to creation, and back to the Creator).

It should be noted that all the fathers and mothers (*ābā'-u ummahāt*) were created by the Primal Intelligence in an instant. Minerals, vegetation and animals, these three are born as the offspring of the fathers and mothers (*ābā'-u ummahāt*). Man, also a form of animal, appeared last, and is thus considered the fruit of the tree of creation.

*Nasafī, al-Insān al-Kāmil 4:1, IK p.72*

See also: **al-‘Aql al-Awwal, arba‘ ‘anāšir** (5.1).

**Āb-i āb** (P) *Lit.* Water (*Āb*) of water (*āb*). Throughout Sufi literature, water (*āb*) serves to represent the divine creative power or spiritual current flowing through all things. *Āb-i āb* points to the essence of this Power. The Water of water implies the Essence behind the essence, the Spirit of the spirit, the original causal force. Just as, physically, water is a necessary and life-sustaining element, so is the divine Power the spiritual force sustaining everything:

O you, who have fallen asleep in the boat of the body,  
 you have seen the water.  
 Now look upon the Water of water (*Āb-i āb*).  
 There is a Water which empowers this water:  
 there is a Spirit which moves this spirit.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III: 1273–74; cf. MJR4 p.72*

Rūmī is saying that human beings are spiritually asleep until they look behind the physical reality to see that Power which is the ultimate motivating force.

See also: **Living Water**.

**Āb-i Ḥayāt, Āb-i Ḥayvān, Āb-i Zindagānī, Āb-i Zindagī** (P) *Lit.* Water (*Āb*) of Life (*Ḥayāt, Ḥayvān, Zindagānī, Zindagī*); Living Water, Water of Life; hence, Water of Immortality; the divine current of spirituality that provides energy and sustenance to all living things:

In *Sūfī* terminology, the Spring of the Water of Life (*Chashmah-i Āb-i Ḥayāt*) is the inner living Name, and anyone gaining access to that Name can drink from the Spring of the Water of Life (*Chashmah-i Āb-i Ḥayāt*), and never dies.... *Āb-i Ḥayāt* alludes to the fountain of love and kindness. Anyone who tastes it becomes immortal. It also alludes to the Beloved's mouth.

*Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIF pp.401, 1550,  
 in FN14 pp.27–28; cf. in SSE4 pp.27–28*

And:

You are the Water of Life (*Āb-i Zindagānī*),  
 we, the seed in the ground.  
 The time has come for You, of Your grace,  
 to commingle with us.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 399:2415, KSD1 p.233, KDS1 p.189*

Water has been used by many mystics as a metaphor for the primal creative Power, the Word of God. It has been called the Water of Life, the Water of Immortality and by a number of similar names. Without water, no living thing can survive. Without the Water of Life, there is no life energy – no existence or life whatsoever.

The Water of Life is a common feature of Middle Eastern mythology. But mystics often take an idea or belief which exists in a given culture, and use it to illustrate a higher truth; or they point to the reality underlying the myth:

This term denotes the Water of Immortality (*Āb-i Zindagānī*). In earlier times, people believed that the inhabited world ended in a dark place called *Ẓulamāt* (lit. darkness). At that place could be found a spring of water, and whoever drank from it would never die.... Mystics refer to it as the reservoir of God's love, thus whoever drinks from it will live forever.

*Ṣādiq Gawharīn, Farhang-i Lughāt, FLTM1 pp.7, 13*

The writer is referring to a belief in the hereafter as *Ẓulamāt*, a place of darkness where a spring of water bestowing immortality is found. Giving a mystical interpretation to the myth, he agrees that the true "Water of Immortality" does indeed originate in the realms beyond this world.

Darkness also refers to the inner condition of man. Maghribī implies this when he observes:

How can the *Khizr* of your heart  
drink from the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayvān*),  
when you still consider darkness  
to be the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayāt*)?

*Maghribī, in FNI4 p.28*

For Rūmī, the Water of Life is a constant theme. He says that only the truly noble can give their entire attention to the Water of Life:

The truly noble, then, is he that gives himself  
to the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayvān*)  
that remains unto everlasting.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:33, MJR4 p.6*

He also writes that to find the Water of Life man must undertake the interior "journey" into the divine "sea", leaving behind the exterior "journey" on the "land" of ordinary life:

The journey of the dry body befell on the dry land,  
 but the journey of the spirit  
 set foot in the heart of the sea.  
 Since your life has passed in travelling on land,  
 now mountain, now river, now desert,  
 how will you obtain the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayvān*)?  
 How will you cleave the waves of the Sea?  
 The waves of earth are our imagination  
 and understanding and thought;  
 The waves of water are self-effacement  
 and intoxication and death (*fanā*’).

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:572–75; cf. MJR2 pp.33–34*

*Ḥayvān* also means ‘animal’, and Rūmī also uses *āb-i ḥayvān* to mean the water of animal life or bodily existence, contrasting this with the divine “Water of Life (*Āb-i Zindagānī*)” and the “Water of Your Love (*Āb-i ‘Ishq*)” which bestows immortality on the soul:

None ever died in the presence  
 of the Water of Life (*Āb-i Zindagānī*).  
 Compared with Your water,  
 the water of life (*āb-i ḥayvān*) is mere dregs.

The water of (material) life (*āb-i ḥayvān*) is the goal  
 of those to whom life is dear:  
 By water, the garden is made verdant and smiling.

But those who quaff the cup of death  
 are living through His love;  
 They have torn their hearts away from life  
 and the water of life (*āb-i jān*).

When the Water of Your Love (*Āb-i ‘Ishq*)  
 gave us its hand,  
 the water of (material) life (*āb-i ḥayvān*)  
 became worthless in our sight.

Every soul derives vitality  
 from the water of (material) life (*āb-i ḥayvān*);  
 But You are the Water (Source)  
 of the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayvān*).

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī V:4218–22; cf. MJR6 p.252*

To “quaff the cup of death” and be “living through His love” means to learn by spiritual practice to withdraw the soul from the body, and experience the process of death while still living in the body. Thus, elsewhere, Rūmī again speaks of the “Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayāt*)” as the divine “love” which “will deliver you from death” – from existence in this world, the realm of death:

Love is the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayāt*),  
and will deliver you from death.

O he who throws himself into love is a king!

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 629:6563, KSD2 p.55, KDS1 p.267, in SPL p.214*

Ḥāfiẓ, a frequent user of these terms, is grateful for the gift of this divine “wine” that comes from the ‘mouth’ of the Beloved:

I kiss His lip and drink its wine:  
for I have found the Water of Life (*Āb-i Zindagānī*).

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.266, DHM p.496, DIH p.419; cf. DHWC (562:1) p.913*

See also: **Chashmah-i Zindagānī, Living Water, Spring, Waters.**

**Āb-i ‘ināyat** (P) *Lit.* Water (*Āb*) of grace (*‘ināyat*); Water of kindness; God’s repeated favour, kindness and benevolence:

O King, the Water of Your grace (*Āb-i ‘ināyat*) reached stone,  
and made it fertile:

And the stone bore fruit, the fruit ripened,  
and acquired flavour.

O King, Your remembrance gave life to the heart,  
and planted the seed of love.

The tree of happiness grew,  
yielding the fruit of freedom.

*Anṣārī, in Kashf al-Asrār, KA3 p.642, in FLI p.3*

The “water” which makes the stone bear fruit, which makes the spiritually dead bear spiritual fruit, is the Living Water, the Water of Life – the divine creative power.

See also: **Living Water.**

**Āb-i kharābāt** (P) *Lit.* Water (*Āb*) of the ruins (*kharābāt*); water of the tavern. Colloquially, *kharābāt* denotes a tavern or wine cellar, the place where a

person is ‘ruined’. In Sufi imagery, the ‘tavern of ruin’ is associated with wine drinking as a common image for the intoxicating bliss of spiritual uplift. As the fire of divine love, the *Āb-i kharābāt* brings ruin to the body, the house of ego and intellect which dominate physical life. Ḥāfiẓ says that it has swept away his “cloak of austerity”, symbolizing rigid adherence to religious practices, and “burned down” the “house” of his “reason”:

My cloak of austerity was taken away  
by the Water of the ruins (*Āb-i kharābāt*);  
The house of my reason was burned down  
by the fire of the wine cellar.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.35, DHM (34:8) p.63, DIH p.85; cf. DHWC (65:6) p.159*

See also: **kharābāt** (►2).

**Āb-i Khiẓr** (P) *Lit.* water (*Āb*) of *Khiẓr* (*lit.* green; the Green One, the Green Man). *Khiẓr* is an ancient or legendary prophet, believed to be immortal, who appears in many Sufi and other Middle Eastern stories. Although not mentioned by name, he is traditionally presumed to be the Servant of God who appears in a story told in the *Qurʾān*. Moses is on a journey when he meets up with a Servant of God, “unto whom We had given mercy from us, and We had taught him knowledge proceeding from us”. Moses wishes to travel with him in order to learn “what you have been taught”. The Servant warns Moses that he will find it impossible, for there will be things he does not understand. Moses insists, “Indeed, you will find me, if God will, patient; and I will not rebel against you in anything.”<sup>1</sup>

So the Servant lays down the condition that Moses must seek no explanation for anything he does, unless he himself offers one. Moses agrees. But the Servant of God then proceeds to do three seemingly outrageous things. He makes a hole in a ship, kills a young man, and repairs a broken-down wall for no wages after the people of the city had refused their requests for food. Moses is so incensed that on each occasion he forgets his promise and remonstrates with the Servant, seeking an explanation. The Servant of God reminds Moses of the condition but, when it happens for the third time, he finally says, “This is the parting between me and you!” But before they part company, the Servant provides excellent and compassionate reasons for his seemingly awful conduct:

As for the ship, it belonged to certain poor men, who toiled upon the sea; and I desired to damage it, for behind them there was a king who was seizing every ship by brutal force. (The king will leave the damaged ship, and the men can easily repair it.)

As for the lad, his parents were believers; and (because of his ungodly nature), we were afraid he would impose on them insolence and unbelief; so we desired that their Lord should give to them, in exchange, one better than he in purity, and nearer in tenderness.

As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan lads in the city, and under it was a treasure belonging to them. Their father was a righteous man; and thy Lord desired that they should come of age, and then bring forth their treasure as a mercy from thy Lord. (By rebuilding the wall, the treasure will remain safe.) I did it not of my own bidding.

This is the interpretation of that which thou couldst bear patiently.

*Qur'ān 18:79–82, KI*

In Sufi tradition, Moses often represents exotericism, the outward way of formal religion, while *Khiḡr* symbolizes the inner, the spiritual or the mystical. In the story, Moses also demonstrates how difficult it is for a disciple to follow his Master unquestioningly.

Traditionally, *Khiḡr* is viewed as the guide of travellers to whom he shows the (mystic) path. Metaphorically, the Water of *Khiḡr* or Water of Immortality means the divine creative power, contact with which brings the soul to the eternal life of God. Numerous stories are related concerning *Khiḡr*, often involving biblical, historical or legendary characters. In one, *Khiḡr* is the cousin of Sikandar or Iskandar (Alexander) Dhū al-Qarnayn (not to be confused with Alexander the Great):

By the order of God Almighty, Iskandar Dhū al-Qarnayn, with a huge army, began his travels to the four corners of the world. His cousin, the prime minister, the prophet *Khiḡr*, along with Elijah the prophet, accompanied him. While travelling, *Khiḡr* and Elijah came across the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayvān*), a spring which was flowing in the darkness. They drank from it and became immortal. They stayed there until Iskandar Dhū al-Qarnayn arrived, and upon hearing their story, he too wanted to drink of that water. But as much as he searched, he could not find it.

*Šādiq Gawharīn, Farhang-i Lughāt, FLTM1 p.9; cf. HB p.216, KKT p.109*

Iskandar, the cousin of *Khiḡr*, is a man of great worldly power. But despite all his armies and wealth, he cannot find the spiritual reality. A number of Sufis have commented on the story of Iskandar's search for the Water of Life that his cousin, *Khiḡr*, found so freely. Ḥāfiẓ says that neither "force" nor "gold" are helpful in this quest:

Iskandar was not given that Water (*Āb*):

neither by force nor by gold is this thing attained.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.126, DHM (271:8) p.266, DIH p.222; cf. DHWC (282:7) p.496*

What is required is union with the divine Beloved, the “bounty of beginningless eternity”:

If the bounty of beginningless eternity  
came to our hand with force and gold,  
Iskandar would have received his portion  
of the Water of *Khizr* (*Āb-i Khizr*).

*Hāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.249, DHM p.482, DIH p.400; cf. DHWC (526:6) p.861*

Nasafī says that it is necessary to go to the place of the afterlife, called the “Darkness (*Ẓulamāt*)”, and then beyond that, to find this “Water of Life”. The “Darkness” is a mythological name for the hereafter, where it was believed that a spring of water bestowing immortality would be found:

Go above and beyond Iskandar Dhū al-Qarnayn’s incapacity; go to  
the Darkness (*Ẓulamāt*) and beyond, and reach the Water of Life  
(*Āb-i Ḥayāt*).

*Nasafī, al-Insān al-Kāmil 11:2, IK p.163*

‘Aṭṭār sees Iskandar’s search from another angle. Speaking as the mystic, he asks that he may meet a seeker who truly desires the “Water of Life” as did Iskandar:

Where is one with Iskandar’s aspiration? –  
knowledge seeking and thirsty in heart (for God)?  
I’d reveal to him the qualities  
of that heavenly Spring of *Kawṣar*,  
and of the Water of Life (*Āb-i Khizr*).

*‘Aṭṭār, in FNI4 p.28*

As to why this Water of Life is so difficult to obtain, Rūmī explains that it is “the insolent devil who came as an ambassador to your soul, in order that he might deprive your foolish soul of the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayvān*) whence *Khizr* drank”.<sup>2</sup> Here, the devil signifies the lower human tendencies.

According to the legend, after drinking from the Water of Life, *Khizr* himself became a fountain of life. He is known as the ‘Green One’, causing greenery to sprout wherever he sets his foot. Green, in Islam, is also the colour associated symbolically with a high spiritual station. Alluding to this story, Rūmī urges the seeker to find this “subterranean Spring”:

Time is short, and the abundant water is flowing away:  
drink before you fall to pieces through separation from it.



A famous subterranean Spring is there,  
 full of the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayāt*):  
 Draw the Water, in order that greenery may sprout from you.  
 Let us drink the Water of *Khizr* (*Āb-i Khizr*)  
 from the river of the Speech (*Nuṭq*) of the Saints:  
 Come, O heedless thirsty man!

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:4300–2; cf. MJR4 p.240*

The “Water of *Khizr*” is “subterranean” – it is hidden within oneself. Even so, it is abundant and is flowing now. Rūmī urges the seeker to drink this abundant Water by contact with the “Saints” before becoming parched with separation from the source of life.

See also: **Chashmah-i Khizr, Living Water.**

1. *Qur’ān* 18:60–82.
2. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* III:2806–7; cf. *MJR4* p.157.

**Āb-i Zindagānī, Āb-i Zindagī** (P) *Lit.* Water (*Āb*) of Life (*Zindagānī, Zindagī*).

See **Āb-i Ḥayāt**.

**Active Intellect** (L. *Intellectus Agens*) Active Intelligence, Active Wisdom; the creative Power of God, understood as His Thought, Intelligence or Wisdom pervading all creation; used to translate the Greek, *Nous*; equivalent to the Arabic, *al-‘Aql al-Fa‘āl*, a term used for the creative Power by the twelfth-century Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides.

See also: **al-‘Aql al-Fa‘āl, Dibbur kadmon, Nous.**

**ādi Dhārā, ādi Dhun, ādi Nām, ādi Shabd** (H) *Lit.* primal (*ādi*) Current (*Dhārā*), Melody (*Dhun*), Name (*Nām*), Word (*Shabd*); the Sound Current, the creative Power of God. The primary creative Power of the Lord is the Word, the Sound Current or Audible Life Stream. All other currents, powers or substations in creation have been created by or have emanated from this Current. This primal Power lies within all of them. Hence, it has been called the primal (*ādi*) Current, Melody and so on. All these expressions are also used for the Sound Current without the *ādi*. The terms have been used by Kabīr, Dariyā Sāhib and particularly Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, who created a number of new terms, often of a composite nature. Kabīr says:

The primal Name (*ādi Nām*) is the philosopher's stone,  
 and the mind is a piece of rusty iron.  
 At the mere touch of the philosopher's stone,  
 the mind is turned to gold,  
 and is freed from the bondage of attachments....

The primal Name (*ādi Nām*) is the true essence:  
 he who realizes it becomes a *hamsa* (*lit.* swan, pure soul).  
 Whosoever realizes the true Name,  
 joins the family of the immortal ones.

The primal Name (*ādi Nām*) is the root, the true essence:  
 other methods (*mantras*) are its branches.  
 Without the real Name (*nij Nām*), says Kabīr,  
 the world is drowning.  
 There are millions of names (of God) in the world,  
 but not one leads to salvation.  
 Few are aware of the primal Name (*ādi Nām*),  
 for it is a secret repetition (*gupt jap*),  
 known only to a rare one.

*Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Nām 1, 3–5, KSS pp.83–84*

Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh has used *ādi Shabd* and *ādi Dhun* to refer to the Sound as it is heard in the astral and causal realms. In this categorization, *sat Shabd* (true Word, true Sound) refers to the Sound in the regions above the mind and below the eternal realm, while *sār Shabd* (essential Sound) refers to the Sound heard in the eternal realm (*sat lok*). The region of *sunṇ* (*lit.* void), to which he refers, lies above the realms of the greater mind and below *sat lok*:

The resounding of the primal Sound (*ādi Dhun*) was heard:  
 catching which, I ascended like a spider on its thread....  
 To pass through the *sunṇ* region,  
 I took the support of the *sat Shabd*,  
 reaching the court of the *Guru* (in *sat lok*).  
 Absorbed and lost in the love of the true Master (*Satguru*),  
 I became entirely oblivious of the world.  
 I found the real, essential Sound (*sār Shabd*)  
 where the splendour of the nameless Being prevails –  
 He who is beyond all name and form.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 18:10.8, 10–12, SBP p.139*

See also: **Dhārā, Dhun, Nām, Shabd.**

**ajar Nām** (H/Pu) *Lit.* Name (*Nām*) without (*a*) old age (*jarā*); the Name not subject to aging or decay; the imperishable Name; the immortal or undying Name; the creative Power:

Practise remembrance of the immortal Name (*ajar Nām*),  
and the whole purpose of your life will be fulfilled.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Chune hue Shabd, Basant 6:1, DSC p.23*

And:

Now that you have received the imperishable Name (*ajar Nām*).  
keep your soul firmly rooted in it.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 20:28.2, SBP p.169*

See also: **ajar** (2.1, 5.1), **Nām**.

**ākāsh Bāṇī** (Pu), **ākāsh(a) Shabd(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* Sound (*Bāṇī*) or Word (*Shabd*) from heaven (*ākāsh*); the Voice from heaven, the Sound from heaven, the celestial Sound; names for the creative Power used by the *ṛishis* of ancient India as well as by mystics of later and more recent centuries. *Ākāsha Shabda* appears in the *Maitrī Upanishad*, where the sounds heard early on in spiritual practice are described:

By closing the ears with the thumbs,  
they hear the heavenly Sound (*ākāsha Shabda*) within the heart.  
It has a sevenfold likeness:  
like rivers, a bell, a brass vessel, a wheel,  
like the croaking of frogs, like rain,  
like when speaking in a still place.  
Having passed beyond this Sound of diverse character,  
they become merged in the Supreme.

*Maitrī Upanishad 6:22*

See also: **Bānī**, **Shabd**.

**akath Kathā** (H/Pu) *Lit.* unutterable (*akath*) Story (*Kathā*); unspoken Language, unuttered Discourse, untold Story, ineffable Tale. *Kathā* means a story, explanation, description, exposition or message of a religious or philosophical nature.

Language is an utterance – an ‘outer’-ance – an expression of the one who utters. The Lord’s utterance, that which emanates from Him, is the

Word, His Language, His Speech or Discourse which brings the creation into being. But it is unspoken, no physical words being involved. Mystics have thus described it as unspoken and indescribable. *Akath Kathā* refers to the divine ‘exposition’, ‘story’ or ‘discourse’ concerning God and His creation, ‘told’ within by the unspoken mystic Word:

Ineffable and true is the Discourse (*akath Kathā*, unspoken Language)  
of the perfect Lord (*Prabh*).

The light of the luminous Lord is pervading all.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 897, MMS*

And:

Within the world, the mortal is engrossed in doubt  
and realizes not the incomprehensible Lord,  
whose Discourse (*akath Kathā*, unspoken Language) is ineffable.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1019, MMS*

See also: **akah** (2.1), **Kathā**.

**akhaṇḍ Kīrtan** (Pu) *Lit.* without (*a*) break (*khaṇḍ*) Music (*Kīrtan*); *akhaṇḍ* means unlimited, unbroken, uninterrupted, unending, unlimited, ceaseless, continuous, indivisible, indestructible; hence, the ceaseless or unending Music, the unbroken Song:

Says Nānak, they who have the perfect true *Guru* as their guide,  
enjoy the incessant lauding of praises (*akhaṇḍ Kīrtan*, ceaseless Music)  
of the Lord as their food and dainty.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 236, MMS*

*Akhaṇḍ Kīrtan* also means the ceaseless (*i.e.* sustained periods of) singing in praise of God, a practice probably originating in a literal understanding of the term.

See also: **Kīrtan** (3.2).

**Akkhar** (Pu), **Akshar(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* letter(s), word(s); the word *Om*; metaphorically, the Creative Word or Power:

Nānak, the Lord Himself has uttered forth the Word (*Akkhar*):  
doubt departs from him who receives the gift.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 150, MMS*

And:

All the *Vedas*, the religious books of the Muslims,  
 the *Smritis* and *Shāstras*:  
 by reading these, salvation (*mukat*, liberation) is not obtained.  
 He who, by *Guru*'s instruction (*Akkhar*, Word), utters the one Name,  
 he gathers the pure glory.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 747, MMS*

And, speaking of the fifty-two letters in the Sanskrit and Hindi alphabet:

Man has joined the fifty-two letters (*akkhar*):  
 but he cannot recognize the one Word (*Akkhar*) of God.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 343, MMS*

Because dogmas, creeds and beliefs are all expressed in human words, the true nature of the divine Creative Word has often been confused with the message contained in sacred writings. Hence, in the *Ādi Granth*, *Guru Arjun*, like many other mystics, points out that God is far above all human words. His truth is known through the one divine Word:

In the Lord's Word (*Akkhar*)  
 is the installation of the three worlds;  
 By joining together the words (*akkhar*),  
 the *Vedas* are studied;  
 The words (*akkhar*) tell  
 what is written in *Shāstras*, *Smritis* and *Purāṇas*;  
 In letters (*akkhar*) are written  
 the hymns, discourses and lectures;  
 By means of letters (*akkhar*) is described  
 the way of escape from dread and doubt;  
 The words (*akkhar*) narrate  
 the religious rites, worldly acts, piety and religion;  
 In the entire visible world is contained  
 the indestructible Lord (*Akkhar*, Word):  
 nevertheless, O Nānak, the supreme Lord remains unattached.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 261, MMS*

See also: **akshara** (2.1, 4.1).

**Amar Phal**, **Amī Phal** (H/Pu), **Amṛit Phal** (H), **Amrit Phal** (Pu) *Lit.* Fruit (*Phal*)  
 of Immortality (*Amar*, *Amṛit*); a mythical fruit of both Middle Eastern and

Indian mythology, the eating of which confers immortality. *Amrit* is the nectar of the gods, imparting immortality; hence also, nectareous Fruit, ambrosial Fruit. All three variants appear in the *Ādi Granth*, where they refer to the spiritual sustenance of the divine Music that leads the soul to the realisation of its innate immortality. Thus, Guru Amardās speaks of the soul as a beautiful bird that – although dwelling on the “Tree” of Life – only finds the “Fruit of Immortality” through the guidance of a Master. Souls are sustained by the divine Power within, but only come to realize it through the help of a *Guru*:

With *Guru*’s love in the heart,  
 the beauteous bird on the Tree (*Birkh*) pecks at (the Fruit of) Truth.  
 It drinks God’s Nectar (*Hari Ras*),  
 abides in celestial bliss, and flies not, nor comes and goes.  
 It obtains dwelling in its own home,  
 and is absorbed in Lord God’s Name.

O my soul (*man*, mind), do thou perform *Guru*’s service.  
 If thou actest in accordance with *Guru*’s will,  
 then thou shalt remain merged in God’s Name, night and day.  
 The birds of the beautiful trees (*Birkh*, Tree) fly,  
 and go in four directions.  
 The more they fly up, the more they suffer:  
 they ever burn and bewail.  
 Without the *Guru*, they behold not God’s mansion,  
 nor obtain the ambrosial Fruit (*Amrit Phal*, Fruit of Immortality)...  
 God’s Name alone  
 is the ambrosial Fruit (*Amrit Phal*, Fruit of Immortality):  
 He Himself gives it to be eaten.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 66, MMS*

Using similar imagery, Guru Nānak says that everything in creation exists and moves by divine Command, and that He is all-pervading. The moon and the sun are His creations. Just as the light of the sun lights up the moon, so too is the Lord’s light reflected in the soul. But only when the senses are stilled can the Fruit of Immortality and the divine Elixir be tasted:

The five birds (the senses) of the Saint fly and flee not:  
 His Tree of Life (*Birkh*) is fruitful,  
 and bears the Ambrosial Fruit (*Amrit Phal*, Fruit of Immortality).  
 By *Guru*’s grace, the Saint contemplates the Lord,  
 hymns His praise, and pecks the corn of the Lord’s Elixir (*Hari Ras*).

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1033, MMS*

The term is also used extensively by Dariyā Sāhib of Bihar (1674–1780), who is noteworthy for using a number of metaphors – such as Wisdom and the Tree (of Life) – which are more commonly associated with the mystic literature of the early Middle East. In one poem, Dariyā portrays the soul as a “divine bird” living in the “alien forest” of the world, continually flitting from one “tree” – or life – to another. Go to your home, he advises, and eat the “Fruit of Immortality” from the “lofty Tree (of Life)”:

O divine bird, dweller in this alien forest,  
 tell me why you fly from one tree to another,  
 perching in different trees,  
 remaining sad, day and night.  
 There (in your own home),  
 you have the extremely soothing, lofty Tree (of Life),  
 most lovely and beautiful,  
 which bears the Fruit of Immortality (*Amī Phal*).  
 Drinking deep of love, become intoxicated,  
 and sacrificing your body, die a living death.  
 Only then can you partake of that Fruit.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Shabd 29:6, DG1 pp.166–67*

In another poem, he says:

He in whom the true Sound manifests  
 goes to the immortal realm,  
 where the Fruit of Immortality (*Amṛit Phal*)  
 and the bliss of love are found:  
 Whereby the hunger of ages is satiated.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Prem Mūl, Sākhī 20, DYD p.22, PMDS p.317; cf. DSSB p.310*

The fruit of the Tree of Life also appears in the *Genesis* story of the garden of Eden, the fruit of which man may “eat, and live for ever”.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **Amṛit, Fruit of Life, Tree of Life.**

1. *Genesis* 3:22, *KJV*.

**ambrosia, ambrosial food** The food of the gods in classical mythology, said to impart immortality; immortal food; food of immortality; hence, mystically, the spiritual nourishment that comes from contact with the divine Music which takes the soul to eternity.

See also: **Amṛit, immortal food.**

**Ameshā Spentās** (Av), **Amshāspands** (Pv) *Lit.* Holy or Blessed (*Spentā*) Immortals (*Ameshā*); Immortal Shining Ones. In his *Gāthās*, Zarathushtra speaks of many aspects of God and His creation. In later Zoroastrian belief, many of these aspects, powers and characteristics came to be personalized as deities who were worshipped. The *Ameshā Spentās*, being six primary aspects of *Ahurā Mazdā*, the supreme Lord, as described by Zarathushtra, became deified in this way, though it is noteworthy that the term *Ameshā Spentās* does not occur anywhere in his *Gāthās*. These six ‘aspects’ are:

1. *Ashā*. The divine and eternal Law or Order; the divine Will; Truth from a mystic point of view.
2. *Vohu Manō*. First Mind or Primal Mind, the Intelligence or Creative Word of God by which He has created and maintains all things. The term is sometimes used in contrast to the *Akō Manō* or Evil Mind, the negative power or devil. The word *mānā* was common in later Iranian languages where it meant mind or soul.
3. *Xshathrā*, *Xshathrā Vairya* or *Vohu Xshathrā*. The might and majesty of *Ahurā Mazdā*; His Power, His Strength; the deathless and creative Power of God; His ability to draw souls back to Himself.
4. *Ārmaiti*. Divine devotion, single-minded devotion to God; piety in a mystic, rather than religious or moral sense; faith, in the mystic sense of living constantly absorbed in the presence and protection of God.
5. *Haurvatāt*. Wholeness, perfection, salvation; a term commonly linked in Zarathushtra’s *Gāthās* with *Ameretatāt* (Immortality).
6. *Ameretatāt*. Immortality, eternal life. *Haurvatāt* and *Ameretatāt* are known as the twin powers, because the one automatically goes with the other, and because Zarathushtra usually mentions them together. They are regarded as the spiritual fruits of life, when the soul partakes of the qualities of God. Becoming one with Him, the soul attains His wholeness, perfection, salvation, immortality and eternal life.

As Zarathushtra’s teachings developed into a religion, the *Ameshā Spentās* became increasingly personalized in the popular mind, as well as in Zoroastrian theology. They came to be worshipped as individual spirits or powers, standing next to the Godhead in rank, administering separate sections of the earth. *Ashā* became the guardian spirit of humanity, *Vohu Manō* of the animal kingdom, *Xshathrā* of the mineral kingdom, *Ameretatāt* of the vegetable kingdom and *Haurvatāt* over the waters of the earth and of aquatic creatures. These meanings, however, are absent from Zarathushtra’s original writings. They are in keeping with the background of polytheism and the



personalization of deities prevalent in the religious milieu of Mesopotamia prior to the time of Zarathushtra.

See also: **Ashā, Vohu Manō, Xshathrā.**

**Amr, al-** (A/P), **Amar** (Pu) *Lit.* the Command, the creative Power; the divine Command, symbolized by the word of creation, “*Kun* (Be)!”:

His Command (*Amr*), when He desires a thing,  
is to say to it “Be (*Kun*)!” –  
And it is.

*Qur’ān 36:82, KI*

In the *Qur’ān*, God says that the Command is the source of the spirit:

When they ask you concerning the Spirit (*al-Rūḥ*), say:  
“The Spirit (*al-Rūḥ*) (comes) by the Command (*Amr*) of my Lord:  
But of the knowledge (thereof) only a little is given to you.”

*Qur’ān 17:85; cf. AYA, HQSA, MGK, QAL*

In Islamic terminology, the spiritual realms are called the ‘*ālam al-Amr* (the world of the Command), contrasted with the physical creation, the ‘*ālam al-khalq* (the world of the creation).

As a result of the Muslim influence in northern India, *Amr* has been adopted into Punjabi as *Amar*, used in the *Ādi Granth* for the Law, the Command or the Word of God. Guru Amardās says that the divine Command prevails throughout all the ages:

The one beneficent true Lord is the life of the universe:  
through the *Guru*’s service and instruction (*Shabd*, Word)  
is He realized.

There is but one Rule and one Command (*Amar*):  
and in every age, the Lord yokes each one to His task.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 1045–46, MMS*

*Amr* also has the same meaning and mystic connotation in Aramaic.

See also: ‘*ālam al-Amr* (4.1), *al-Ḥukm, Kun.*

**Amr al-taklīfī, al-** (A), **Amr-i taklīfī** (P) *Lit.* the prescriptive or instructing (*taklīfī*) Command (*Amr*); the command that instructs or prescribes; contrasted with

*al-Amr al-takwīnī*, the creative Command or Power by which God generates the creation.

See also: **al-Amr al-takwīnī**.

**Amr al-takwīnī, al-** (A), **Amr-i takvīnī** (P) *Lit.* the generating (*takwīnī*) Command (*Amr*); the creative Command or Power by which God generates the creation; contrasted with *al-Amr al-taklīfī* (the instructing Command) which gives men laws and injunctions.

Although terms such as God's Word, Command and Speech have been commonly used in mystical literature to denote the divine creative power, many people take them to mean the scriptures. For this reason, mystics have often made a point of distinguishing between the words used to convey mystic teachings and the Creative Word itself. Thus, Ibn 'Arabī and his followers described two types of divine Command (*Amr*). The *taklīfī* Command consists of laws and injunctions instructing man how to live and how to come closer to the God. The *takwīnī* (generating) Command is the divine Word, "Be (*Kun*)!"<sup>1</sup> by which God brings the creation into being. In other words, *al-Amr al-taklīfī* includes the scriptures through which God "commands them to obey the prophets and follow religion", while *al-Amr al-takwīnī* is the unspoken, unwritten Word, which cannot be contained in any language.<sup>2</sup>

1. *Qur'ān* 36:82.

2. W.C. Chittick and P.L. Wilson, *Divine Flashes, DF* p.149.

**Amṛit(a)** (S/H), **Amrit** (Pu), **Amī** (H/Pu) *Lit.* not (*a*) dead (*mṛit*); immortal, undying; hence also, the nectar of the gods, conferring immortality; thus, divine Nectar, Water of Immortality, Water of Life, Immortal Draught, Elixir of Life; likewise, ambrosia, the food of the gods, also imparting immortality. *Amī*, meaning nectar, is a shortened form of *Amṛit*. The metaphor is used extensively in the *Ādi Granth* for the creative Power. Guru Amardās is explicit as to its meaning:

Ambrosia (*Amrit*) is the true Name (*Nām*),  
 but one can say not its praise.  
 No sooner does the man drink the Name Nectar  
 than he becomes acceptable,  
 and gets absorbed in the perfect Lord (*Shabd*, Word).

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 33, MMS*

It is to be found within, confers freedom from fear, and takes a soul beyond the dominion of death:

Man's within is brimful with the Name Nectar (*Amrit*):  
 it is through tasting that its relish is known.  
 He whom the Lord, by His grace, makes drink it  
 is afflicted not by death again.  
 They who taste it become fear free,  
 and with the Lord's Elixir (*Hari Ras*), they are satiated.  
*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 1092, MMS*

It refreshes the soul:

The true Nectar (*Amrit*) rains and trickles  
 down the mouth of the *Guru*-wards  
 (*gurmukhs*, one who faces the *Guru*)  
 Ever verdant is their soul,  
 and they automatically sing God's praise.  
*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 428, MMS*

It confers immortality:

Poison and nectar (*amrit*) are both found within,  
 but only a rare one knows it.  
 Those who took the poison, died;  
 Those who drank the Draught of Immortality (*Amī*)  
 became immortal.  
*Dādū, Bānī 1, Sajīvan 21, DDBI p.213*

It brings the soul into contact with God:

I have drunk the divine Nectar (*Amī*) to my fill:  
 now, every moment, I behold the Lord.  
*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 34:2.13, SBP p.282*

It rains unceasingly. It destroys the ego and human imperfection, and immerses the soul in divine love:

The Lord's Nectar (*Amrit*) ever rains:  
 the man of wisdom alone understands this thing.  
 He who, by the *Guru*'s grace, realizes this,  
 keeps the Lord's Nectar (*Amrit*) enshrined in his mind.

They who still their ego and desire,  
 ever indrink the Lord's Nectar (*Amrit*),  
 and remain imbued with His love.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 1281, MMS*

Through it, and with the *Guru*'s help, divine light dawns within, and the soul has the vision of God:

By means of *Gurbāṇī* (*Gurbachan*, the Word of the *Guru*),  
 he has easily tasted the sublime,  
 exquisite and ambrosial Discourse of God  
 (*Hari Amrit Kathā*, God's immortal Word).

There, in his heart, dawns the divine light which like the sun,  
 removing night's darkness, banished his mental ignorance.

Through the *Guru*, he beholds with his eyes  
 the unseen, unapproachable, unknowable and immaculate Lord.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 87, MMS*

See also: **Dew**.

**Amrit Bāṇī, Amrit Dhārā, Amrit Jal, Amrit Nām, Amrit Ras** (Pu) *Lit.* immortal (*Amrit*) Sound (*Bāṇī*), Stream (*Dhārā*), Water (*Jal*), Name (*Nām*), Elixir (*Ras*); hence, Stream of Immortality, Water of Immortality, Water of Life, Elixir of Life and so on. *Amrit* also means the nectar of the gods which confers immortality; thus also, the drink, Draught or Elixir of Immortality, the divine Nectar; hence also, Stream of Nectar (*Amrit Dhārā*), ambrosial Name, Nectar Name (*Amrit Nām*), and so forth; all are terms for the immortal creative Power of bliss and sweetness. This Power is the true wealth of the soul:

The Nectar (*Amrit*) is the treasure of God's Name (*Nām*) –  
 meet together and quaff it, O my brethren.

By remembering whom peace (*sukh*) is obtained,  
 and all the thirst is slaked.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 318, MMS*

It is always present within:

Within him, the Stream of Nectar (*Amrit Dhārā*) uniformly rains:  
 the soul drinks, hears and reflects upon the Name.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 102, MMS*

It cures all ills by taking the soul out of this world:

The Name of God, the immaculate Nectareous Water  
(*Amrit Jal*, Water of Immortality) is the best medicine in the world.  
Says slave Bhīkhan, by *Guru*'s grace,  
I have obtained the door of salvation.

*Bhīkhan, Ādi Granth 659, MMS*

And it brings life to the spiritually dead of this world, taking them out of the realm of birth and death:

Receiving the God's immortalizing Nectar  
(*Amrit Ras*, Elixir of Immortality),  
the dead one is restored to life, and then dies not again.  
By Lord-Master's Name (*Hari Hari Nām*),  
man obtained the immortal status (*amar pad*),  
and into God's Name (*Hari Nām*) merges he.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 447, MMS*

See also: **Bānī, Dhārā, Nām, ras.**

**Amṛit Tattva** (H), **Amrit Tatt** (Pu) *Lit.* immortal (*amṛit*) Essence or Quintessence (*Tattva, Tatt*); also, the nectareous Essence; the creative Power:

By the *Guru*'s instructions,  
man's mind becomes immaculate,  
and he utters the nectar-sweet Quintessence  
(*Amrit Tatt*, immortal Essence) of the Name.  
God's Name ever abides in his mind,  
and his mind waves are (automatically) calmed.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 1334, MMS*

See also: **Tattva** (2.2).

**anāhat(a)** (S/H), **anāhad** (H), **anhat, anhad** (H/Pu) + **Bāṇī, Dhun(i)** (H/Pu), **Dhvani** (S/H), **Nād(a), Shabd(a)** (S/H/Pu), **Bājā** (H/Pu) *Lit.* not (*an*) struck (*āhata*); unstruck, unbeaten; commonly used by mystics for the music of the divine creative power, either on its own, as the *Anāhad* (Unstruck), or in such combinations as *anāhad Bāṇī* (unstruck Sound), *anāhad Dhun* (unstruck Melody), *anāhata Shabda* (unstruck Word or Sound) and *anāhata*

*Nāda* (unstruck Sound), *anhad Bājā* (unstruck Music); also used with the names of various musical instruments to indicate the inner unstruck Music, as in *anhad bīna* (unstruck *vīṇā*), *anhad tūr* (unstruck *tūr*) and so on.

The music of this world requires the playing of some musical instrument, but the divine Sound resounds for as long as the creation continues. It is therefore said to be unstruck (*anāhata*). The root word is the Sanskrit, *anāhata*. *Anāhad* and *anhad* (sometimes transliterated as *anahad*) are vernacular variants, Sanskrit 't's being commonly replaced by 'd's. Being unstruck implies that this divine Music goes on eternally. Consequently, these terms are also translated as ceaseless, unending or limitless. The etymology of this translation is sometimes said to be from the Arabic term *had* (boundary, limit), which has become a part of the Hindi and Punjabi languages. In this case, the term *anhad* has been taken as a bilingual fusion of the Punjabi negative prefix (*an*) with the Arabic *had*, making *anhad*, and taken to mean 'limitless' or 'ceaseless'. The same is the case with the vernacular variant *anhat* (sometimes transliterated as *anahat*). Because *anhad* and *anhat* only appear in mystic literature, no longer being a part of common language, an uncertainty remains over whether these two words mean unstruck or unceasing. In practice, both translations are used.

Sanskrit literature of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* refers to the *anāhata Shabda*, the *anāhata Nāda* or just the *Anāhata*, indicating that the practice of the Sound was known in India in those times. Frequent references are also made to the sound of *Brahman* (absolute Reality) which is called *Om*, *Pranava* or *Udgītha*.<sup>1</sup> In the *Brāhmaṇas*, it is also said that the *Vāk* (Word, Voice) is second only to God, and that all worlds and beings are supported by it.<sup>2</sup> The *Shiva Saṃhitā* has a section, largely derived from the *Nāda Bindu Upanishad*, devoted specifically to the preliminary *anāhata nādas* (unstruck sounds) that lead the mind into the *chidākāsha* (the 'sky' of the body).<sup>3</sup> The *Dhyāna Bindu Upanishad* speaks of the Sound (*Nāda*) that arises from the Unstruck (*Anāhata*):

All doubts are dispelled from the *yogin* who regards the *Anāhata* which is above the *Nāda* as the highest.

*Dhyāna Bindu Upanishad* 3; cf. *TMU* pp.154, 294

Saints have also spoken repeatedly of the unstruck Sound. It is the sound of the Creative Word:

The celestial Strain (*anhat Bāṇī*, unstruck Sound) resounds through the pure Name.

Through the *Guru*'s instruction (*Shabd*, Word), the man is absorbed in the true One.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth* 115, *MMS*

It is present in every Being:

The unstruck Music (*anāhat Dhvani*) resounds in all beings.

*Tukārām, Gāthā 1789, STG p.311*

It goes on resounding even in those who are spiritually asleep:

The unstruck Sound (*anhad Nād*)

is resounding in the sky (*gagan*),

while your life is rapidly ebbing away.

Spending your time doing this and that,

you remain in illusion, and never wake up.

*Bhīkhā, Bānī 17:1, BSB p.15*

It reaches to the Ultimate, but yet permeates every cell of the body:

Unfathomable indeed is the unstruck Sound (*anhad Shabd*):

It is further than the furthest,

yet this pure, immaculate, living Sound (*Shabd*)

is contained within the body itself.

*Charandās, Bānī 1, Ashtpadī 1:1, CDB1 p.35*

It is heard within:

He sees, within himself,

the place where the Sound thunders loudly.

The mind is overjoyed to experience

the ringing of the Unstruck (*Anhad*).

*Tulsī Sāhib, Shabdāvalī 1, Rekhtā 4:2, TSH1 p.7*

The mystics encourage the souls of this world to come into contact with it:

Come *faqīrs*, let us go to the fairground,

and hear the Music (*Bājā*) of the mystics;

Listen there to the unstruck Word (*anhad Shabd*) of many colours,

and cast away the saffron robe of the ascetic.

The unstruck Music (*anhad Bājā*) brings only oneness,

and knows no enmity.

It comes from the opening in the head....

You must still your mind in that Music (*Bājā*).

*Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt 18, KBS p.29, SBSU p.211; cf. BS pp.345–46*

To hear it requires inner concentration:

He who closes his nine doors and restrains his wandering mind,  
 obtains an abode in the Lord's own tenth home.  
 There, the unstruck Music (*anhad Shabd*, unstruck Sound)  
 plays day and night:  
 Through the *Guru*'s instruction,  
 this celestial Strain (*Shabd*, Sound) is heard.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 124, MMS*

Hold your mind steady and draw it upwards:  
 then you will hear the unstruck Sound (*anhad Bānī*).

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 20:4.4, SBP p.156*

This concentration is brought about by repetition of the names given by a Master:

I continue regularly with the repetition of the holy names,  
 and listen lovingly to the unstruck Melody (*anhad Dhun*).  
 By listening to the Melody, I ascend upwards.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 6:15.3–4, SBP p.62*

Listening to the “unstruck Melody” leads to inner visions of great beauty:

I behold a unique city:  
 the *Guru* has given me a wondrous key.  
 I hear the ringing of the unstruck Melody (*anhad Dhun*),  
 and behold marvellous beauty.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 5:3.1–2, SBP p.45*

The soul listens to the “unstruck Sound” and is spiritually intoxicated:

There, the wonderful resounding  
 of the unstruck Sound (*anhad Nād*) is heard,  
 and a constant rain of Nectar is enjoyed.

*Bhāī Gurdās, Vārān 18:16*

Sweetly does the unstruck Music (*anhad Bājā*) resound:  
 accomplished is the Musician, enchanting the tune.  
 Prayer and fasting are all forgotten  
 when the Distiller offers the cup, my friends!  
 Turn the watchman away, my friends.

*Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt 104, KBS p.228, SBSU p.386; cf. BS p.374*

It rises up, and sees the great light of *sahans dal kanwal*:



Listen always to the unstruck Sound (*anhad Bānī*),  
and behold the wonderful flame ( *jyoti*) as a proof thereof.  
*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 23:1.75, SBP p.200*

The soul goes beyond the realms of the mind to the region of *sun*n (void),  
which lies immediately above:

Take the key and open the door –  
in *sun*n will the unstruck Sound (*anhad Nād*) be heard.  
*Kabīr, Akhrāvātī, Chaupāī 28:5, KSA p.17*

It listens forever to this wonderful Melody:

Unbeaten celestial Strain (*anhad Dhunī*) ever plays for me:  
in the state of exaltation I am absorbed in God’s affection.  
*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 91, MMS*

It is the only means of liberation from the body:

O Brother, the *Guru* speaks clearly:  
attach yourself to the unstruck Sound (*anāhad Shabd*).  
There is no way other than the Word  
to break free from this mortal vessel of clay.  
*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 20:10.1–2, SBP p.161*

See also: **Dhun, Nāda, Shabd, vīṇā.**

1. e.g. *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 1:5.1.
2. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 2:8.8.4, *Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa* 20:14.2.
3. *Shiva Saṃhitā* 5:28–29.

**apple tree** See **Tree of Life.**

‘**Aql al-‘aql, al-** (A), ‘**Aql-i ‘aql** (P) *Lit.* the Intelligence (‘*Aql*) of intelligence (‘*Aql*); the Intellect of intellect; the divine Intelligence or Intellect; the creative Intelligence or Power that forms and sustains the creation. There is no one word in English which spans the breadth of meaning conveyed by ‘*aql*. At the human level, it is intelligence, intellect and wisdom, and so on – that which distinguishes man from other creatures. In the higher sense, it is the divine Intelligence that underlies everything in creation.

See also: **al-‘Aql al-Kullī.**

‘**Aql al-Awwal, al-** (A), ‘**Aql-i Avval** (P) *Lit.* the Primal (*Awwal*) Intelligence (*‘Aql*); Primal Intellect, Primal Wisdom, Primal Mind, First Intelligence, First Mind, First Wisdom; the divine creative power.

According to a well-known traditional saying (*ḥadīth*): “The first thing created by God was the ‘*Aql*.” This is the traditional basis for the understanding of *al-‘Aql al-Awwal*, which is hence termed the First Caused. Out of the ‘*Aql al-Awwal* come what are called the ‘fathers and mothers’ of creation. These are a descending series of intelligences, minds and firmaments, one below the other.

Sufis say that at the time of creation, a supreme Essence appeared out of the highest sublimity of God. Out of that one Essence have come all the multitude of forms. That one Essence is called the White Pearl (*Durrat al-Bayḍā’*), and *al-‘Aql al-Awwal* is sometimes equated with it. It is an incomprehensible Essence, indivisible and not subject to decomposition. *Al-‘Aql al-Awwal* is thus a primary power, considered very close to God. It is an “ocean of light” that existed before the remainder of the creation with its formative firmaments together with its ‘rulers’ or centres of creative consciousness – its “minds” and “intelligences” – “had yet been created”:

‘*Aql-i Avval* was an ocean of light whose vastness none but God Almighty knows. It was just one ocean, and no other minds (*nufūs*) or intelligences (*‘uqūl*) had yet been created. The first firmament was an ocean of darkness (*ḡulmat*) whose vastness none but God Almighty knows. It was just one ocean, and no other firmaments or celestial bodies had yet been made.

*Nasafī, al-Insān al-Kāmil 14:2, IK p.189*

Nasafī goes on to say that although *al-‘Aql al-Awwal* is the divine creative power, it is not God Himself:

Existence, power, knowledge, will and the powers of seeing, hearing and talking are attributes of ‘*Aql-i Avval*; and creation, life-giving and teaching are actions of ‘*Aql-i Avval*. Many evolved souls arriving at this stage have mistaken it for the ultimate region since they perceived its attributes, actions and command as final. They have worshipped it as God for a while, until the Lord’s grace helped them to realize their error.

*Nasafī, al-Insān al-Kāmil 17:2, IK p.225*

*Al-‘Aql al-Awwal* is also used to mean the same as *al-‘Aql al-Kullī* (Cosmic Intelligence, Universal Wisdom).

See also: **Ḥokhmah, Mind, Nous, Wisdom.**

‘Aql al-Fa‘āl, al- (A), ‘Aql-i Fa‘āl, ‘Aql-i Mushīr (P) *Lit.* the Active (Fa‘āl) Intellect (‘Aql); Directive (*Mushīr*) Intelligence; Active Intelligence, Manifest Wisdom; the active, creative expression of God’s will; the manifestation of the divine Intelligence, Intellect or Wisdom, and the essence of the soul; the divine creative Power, especially at the physical level.

The concept of the ‘Active Intellect’ in Muslim thought derives originally from the Aristotelian principle that for any potentiality to be manifested an agent that is already manifest is first required. In keeping with this principle, Aristotle said that the potential intellect in man is manifested through an eternally Active Intellect. Some Muslim philosophers have held that this Active Intellect is God; others have argued that it is an aspect of man’s self. The most common understanding is that it is one of the (usually ten) Intellects or Intelligences (‘*uqūl*) that descend from *al-‘Aql al-Kullī* (Cosmic Intelligence, Cosmic Intellect), each creating and ruling a sphere of the creation. The Active Intellect is responsible for giving individual forms to material objects, and also for providing a universal model or blueprint for man’s intellect or intelligence. It is generally seen as directing events on the material plane.

Using an equivalent expression, Rūmī says that ‘*Aql-i Mushīr* (Directive Intelligence) directs and orchestrates the motion of the stars and planets, and all movement in the physical universe. Before this vast power, all forms visible to the physical senses are very feeble indeed:

How should the axe be afraid  
of the thickness of the branches?  
It cuts them to pieces....  
What does the flame care  
for the great quantity of firewood? ...  
What is form in the presence of Reality?  
Very feeble....

Judge by the analogy of the celestial wheel:  
from whom does its motion proceed?  
From the Directive Intelligence (‘*Aql-i Mushīr*).

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3327–31; cf. MJR2 p.181*

The Arabic-speaking Jewish mystic and philosopher, Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), an early figure in the mutual influence between Jewish and Sufi mysticism, also uses *al-‘Aql al-Fa‘āl* as a term for the creative Power.

See also: **Active Intellect, Dibbur Kadmon.**

‘**Aql al-Kullī, al-** (A), ‘**Aql-i Kull** (P) *Lit.* the Universal (*Kullī*) Reason (‘*Aql*); Universal Intelligence, Universal Intellect, Universal Wisdom, Cosmic Intelligence; the divine creative power; also called *al-‘Aql al-Awwal* (Primal Intelligence, First Intellect, Primal Wisdom, Primal Mind). Rūmī writes poetically about this divine Intelligence:

Endeavour to become old in intelligence and religion,  
 that you may become –  
 like the Universal Intelligence (‘*Aql-i Kull*) –  
 a seer of the inward Reality.  
 When that beautiful Intelligence (‘*Aql-i zībā*)  
 unveiled its face from Nonexistence,  
 He (God) gave it a robe of honour and a thousand names.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:2178–79; cf. MJR4 p.392*

In another place, he compares human intelligence or intellect with the “Intellect of intellect (‘*Aql-i ‘aql*)”, a term which he also identifies with ‘*Aql-i Kull*:

The philosopher is in bondage to the things of the intellect (*ma‘qūlāt*),  
 but the Saint rides like a prince  
 on the Intellect of intellect (‘*Aql-i ‘aql*).  
 The Intellect of intellect (‘*Aql-i ‘aql*) is your kernel,  
 your intellect (‘*aql*) is the husk:  
 The animal belly is forever seeking husks.  
 He that seeks the kernel has a hundred loathings for the husk:  
 to the goodly Saints, only the kernel is truly lawful.

If the intellect (‘*aql*), the husk, offers a hundred proofs,  
 how should the Universal Intellect (‘*Aql-i Kull*)  
 ever take a step without complete certainty?

The intellect (‘*aql*) makes books entirely black (with writing);  
 The Intellect of intellect (‘*Aql-i ‘aql*)  
 fills the whole universe (with light)  
 from the moon (of Reality).  
 It is free from black and white:  
 the light of its moon shines upon heart and soul.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:2527–32; cf. MJR4 pp.141–42, in SPL pp.36–37*

Tahānawī describes ‘*Aql-i Kull* as the spiritual Adam and *nafs-i kull* (universal mind) as the spiritual Eve:

In *Ṣūfī* language, that which represents the level of unity is called ‘*Aql-i Avval*.... It is the origin and reality of the human being, since

he is the receiver and a medium for the manifestation of the universal mind (*naḥs-i kull*). It is called by four names: Wisdom (‘*Aql*), First Pen (*Qalam-i Avval*), Greater Soul (*Rūḥ-i A‘zam*) and Mother of the Book (*Umm al-Kitāb*). In reality, *Ādam* (the first man) is the image of ‘*Aql-i Kull* and *Ḥawwā*’ (Eve) is the image of the universal mind (*naḥs-i kull*).

*Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIF p.1030, in FNI9 p.71*

See also: **al-‘Aql al-‘aql**.

**Archē** (Gk) *Lit.* Beginning, Source; First Principle; mystically, the Creative Word, as in the opening words of *Genesis* in the *Septuagint*, the early Greek (c.C3rd–C2nd BCE) translation of the Hebrew Bible:

In the Beginning (Gk. *Archē*, He. *Reshit*),  
God created the heaven and the earth.

*Genesis 1:1, KJV*

Jewish commentators have taken the Hebrew word for “Beginning (*Reshit*)” as a synonym for the divine creative power, as did the first-century Greek-speaking Jew, Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, who worked from the *Septuagint*, where the term is *Archē*. Alluding to the opening lines of *Genesis*, and writing of the creative Power as the “heavenly Wisdom”, Philo says:

By using many words for it, Moses has ... made it manifest that the sublime and heavenly Wisdom is of many names; for he calls it Beginning (*Archē*) and Image and Vision of God.

*Philo Judaeus, Allegorical Interpretation I:14, PCW1 pp.174–75*

Elsewhere, he also writes that “God’s First-born, the *Logos*” is called by “many names”, among which he includes “Beginning (*Archē*) and Name of God”.<sup>1</sup>

The opening to John’s gospel intentionally echoes *Genesis*:

In the Beginning (*Archē*) was the Word (*Logos*),  
and the Word (*Logos*) was with God,  
and the Word (*Logos*) was God.  
The same was in the Beginning (*Archē*) with God.  
All things were made by it (the *Logos*),  
and without it (the *Logos*)  
was not any thing made that was made.

*John 1:1–3; cf. KJV, TYN*

An interpretation that – as in *Genesis* – gives the “Beginning” a place in the creative process is provided by the gnostic Ptolemy, disciple of the well-known Valentinus (fl. 140–160). The Valentinian description of the hierarchy of creation is complex, involving the generation or emanation in successive stages of a multitude of *aeons* – heavenly realms, together with their rulers. Ptolemy describes the origins of this hierarchy from the opening lines of John’s gospel. Firstly, he says, God gives birth to the “Beginning (*Archē*)” which he also calls the “Son”. From the “Beginning” arises the *Logos*, from which the whole system of *aeons* then comes into being. John, says Ptolemy,

having first of all distinguished these three – God, the Beginning (*Archē*) and the *Logos* – again unites them, that he may demonstrate how each of them is generated ... and may at the same time show their union with one another, and with the Father.

For the Beginning (*Archē*) is in the Father and from the Father, while the *Logos* is in the Beginning (*Archē*) and from the Beginning (*Archē*). Quite rightly, then, did he say, “In the Beginning (*Archē*) was the *Logos*”, for he (the *Logos*) was in the Son (the Beginning).

“And the *Logos* was (one) with God.” For the Beginning (*Archē*) is one with God and, consequently, “the *Logos* was God”. For what is begotten of God is God.

“The same was in the Beginning (*Archē*) with God” – this clause discloses the order of generation.

“All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made,” for the *Logos* was the author of form, and the source of all the *aeons* that came into existence after him.

*Irenaeus, Against Heresies I:8.5, AHI p.36*

Whether or not the author of John’s gospel meant something quite so complex is uncertain, but Ptolemy’s interpretation, together with the observations of Philo Judaeus, indicate that *Archē* was sometimes understood as something specific in the creative process.

See also: **ādi** (2.1), **Logos**, **Reshit**.

1. Philo Judaeus, *On the Confusion of Tongues* 28; cf. PCW4 pp.88–91, TGH1 p.234.

**Ashā**, **Ashā vahishta** (Av), **Arta** (Pv) *Lit.* great or supreme (*vahishta*) Law, Order, Command (*Ashā*); hence, Truth, Righteousness; the divine and

eternal Law, the divine Order, Command or will; Truth from a mystic point of view. In later Zoroastrian writings, *Ashā* comes to mean truth, goodness, purity, holiness or righteousness in the religious or moralistic sense. However, scholars have pointed out that in Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* it seems to mean much more than this.

Many mystics have spoken of the creative Power as the Lord's will in manifestation, and Zarathushtra's use of this term suggests that this is included in the meaning he intended. *Ashā* also has affinities with the Sanskrit *satya* and the Hindi *sach*, also meaning both 'Truth', as well as 'Reality'. Thus, Zarathushtra calls the Saviour or perfect Master, the *Ashāvant* (follower of Truth), because of "his storehouse of *Ashā*",<sup>1</sup> just as he is known as a *Satguru* in Hindi and Punjabi.

The divine Law or Word of God is the primary truth in creation. Consequently, says Zarathushtra, the great enemy of *Ashā* is *druj* – untruth or illusion. He says that the followers of *Ashā* will come dwell in the highest realms of heaven:

The followers of *Ashā* (Truth) shall dwell  
in heavens radiant with Your sun (*havare pishyasū*);  
Their place shall surely be in the abode of the wise.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 50:2; cf. DSZ p.736*

One of the later Zoroastrian songs, whose authorship is uncertain, says that the approach to God is through *Ashā*:

Through the best *Ashā*, through the highest *Ashā*,  
may we obtain a vision of You,  
may we come near to You,  
may we abide in full companionship with You.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 60:12; cf. ZM pp.7–8*

Clearly, something more than holiness is implied by *Ashā*, since goodness and religious righteousness alone cannot bring a soul to union with God. The conclusion of the *Yasna* says:

There is but one path, the path of *Ashā*:  
all other paths are non-paths.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 72:11; cf. ZM p.8*

See also: **Command**, **Law**, **ṛita** (2.2), **Truth** (2.2).

1. *Ahuna Vairya*, in *AVG* p.6.

**Ashabda, Ashabda Brahman** (S) *Lit.* without (*a*) sound (*shabda*); the state in which sound is not manifest; soundless sound. *Ashabda Brahman* is used in reference to the stage beyond *Brahman*.

The *Upanishads* make frequent references to the sound of *Om*, the Sound (*Shabda*) of the region of *Brahman*. It is said that *Brahman* is to be realized by means of *Om*. However, according to a number of Indian Saints, there are realms higher than that which the *Upanishads* describe as *Brahman*.

Although the *Upanishads* do not usually refer to any reality higher than *Brahman*, there are a few such references. This has been designated *parama-Brahman* (highest *Brahman*) where – it is said – the manifest Sound (*Shabda*) is merged into the unmanifest Sound (*Ashabda*). This is described in the *Maitrī Upanishad*:

There are, verily, two *Brahmans* to be meditated upon –  
*Shabda* and *Ashabda*.

Only through *Shabda* is the *Ashabda* revealed.  
 Here (in *Brahman* and below), the *Shabda* is *Om*.  
 Moving upward with its help,  
 the ascent can be made into the *Ashabda*.

There (the soul says):  
 “This is the way, this is immortality,  
 this is complete union and tranquillity.”  
 Just as a spider moving upward on a thread finds free space,  
 so assuredly does the meditator,  
 moving upward by the *Om*, obtain freedom....

By closing the ears with the thumbs,  
 they hear the heavenly Sound (*ākāsha Shabda*) within the heart.

It has a sevenfold likeness:  
 like rivers, a bell, a brass vessel, a wheel,  
 like the croaking of frogs, like rain,  
 like when speaking in a still place.

Having passed beyond this Sound of diverse character,  
 they become merged in the Supreme,  
 the *Ashabda*, the unmanifest *Brahman*.

There (in the *Ashabda*),  
 they are without attributes and indistinguishable,  
 like different juices that have all reached  
 the same consistency of honey.

For this has definitely been said:  
 “There are two *Brahmans* to be known,  
 the *Shabda Brahman* and what is higher (*Ashabda Brahman*).”



Those who know the *Shabda Brahman*,  
can enter the higher *Brahman*.

*Maitrī Upanishad 6:22*

Alluding to this higher *Ashabda Brahman*, the *Gītā* also says:

By the identical (spiritual) practice as before,  
he is carried on irresistibly.  
Thus even the seeker of the knowledge of (this true) *yoga*,  
transcends the *Shabda Brahman*.

*Bhagavad Gītā 6:44*

As mystic experience deepens, the inner Sound that is heard becomes increasingly refined or subtle. Those who hear the Sound of one level, may feel that the higher Sound is inaccessible or unmanifest. Likewise, those who had reached *Brahman* with the help of the *Om*, if they knew that there was something higher, may have felt that it was unmanifest or *Ashabda*.

See also: **Shabd**.

**Ashvattha** (S) A mythological tree depicted in the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and other Hindu sacred texts, whose root is with *Brahman*, while its branches form the creation; often depicted as a *pīpal* tree (*Ficus religiosa*), and translated as the Sacred Fig Tree. The *Ashvattha* is a metaphor for the means by which the creation comes into being from a divine “Root”, providing sustenance for all its ever changing branches (the creation).

The derivation is uncertain. Some suggest: horses (*ashva*) stand (*stha*, *ttha* being a phonetic variant), implying ‘beneath which horses stand’. Others propose: not (*a*) tomorrow (*shvas*) existing or permanent (*sthita*); that which does not last until tomorrow; thus, perishable or impermanent. The derivation supported by particular commentators generally reflects the interpretation, especially since the implied meaning of the *Ashvattha* varies throughout Indian sacred texts.

According to the *Yajur Veda*, the gods sit beneath the *Ashvattha* in the upper heavens. According to the *Padma Purāṇa*, the Hindu trinity dwell in this Tree. In its trunk lives *Vishṇu* (the preserver), in the centre *Shiva* (the destroyer), and in the upper portion *Brahmā* (the creator). Understood symbolically, this imagery means that these three powers are an integral aspect of the processes by which creation is manifested. The *Ashvattha* Tree has also been known as the *Jñānavṛksha* (Tree of divine Knowledge), the *Bodhivṛksha* (Tree of Wisdom), the *Brahmavṛksha* (Tree of *Brahman*), and the *Jīvanavṛksha* (Tree of Life).

In the *Kaṭha Upanishad*, *Brahman* and the creation are described as an inverted “*Ashvattha* Tree”. The “root” is *Brahman*, while the branches are the creation:

There is an eternal *Ashvattha* Tree:  
 its root above, its branches below.  
 It is the Resplendent, It is *Brahman*,  
 It alone is called the Immortal.  
 In It, are all the worlds contained –  
 beyond It, no one can go.  
 Truly, this (*ātman*, soul) is That (*Brahman*).

*Kaṭha Upanishad* 2:3.1

In this sense, it is only the “Root” which is truly eternal. The creation itself is grounded in eternity, but is not itself eternal. The *Ashvattha* is inverted because, metaphorically, *Brahman* is ‘higher’ than the creation, which is Its lower manifestation. The immensity of *Brahman*, which remains detached and supreme while supporting the branches and leaves of the creation below, is symbolized in the *Ṛig Veda* and *Upanishads* as being three parts detached and one part involved as the branches and leaves of creation. Thus, the *Maitrī Upanishad* says:

For this is what has been said:  
 “The three-quartered *Brahman* has its root above.  
 Its branches are space, wind, fire, water, earth and so on.  
 This *Brahman* is called the *Ashvattha* Tree.  
 The splendour of yonder sun belongs to It,  
 and the splendour too of the syllable *Om*.  
 Therefore, worship It with *Om* continually,  
 for It is the only enlightener of a man.”

*Maitrī Upanishad* 6:4

Similar statements are found in the *Ṛig Veda*:

The venerable *Varuṇa*, Sovereign of the universe,  
 sustains erect the Tree’s stem in the unfathomable realm;  
 With its root high above, its branches spread downward,  
 may they sink deep within us as the sources of existence!

*Ṛig Veda* 1:24.7

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Ashvattha* is still rooted “above, its branches below”, but the emphasis is on the entangling branches and the ramifications

of its secondary roots forming the creation. In fact, Kṛishṇa advises taking an axe to the entire *Ashvattha* Tree, with all its complications:

Rooted above, its branches below,  
 is the imperishable *Ashvattha* Tree,  
 of which the scriptures tell.  
 Its leaves are the hymns of the *Vedas*.  
 He who knows it, truly understands the *Vedas*.

Nourished by the *guṇas* (attributes),  
 with the sense objects as its budding shoots,  
 its branches spread above and below.  
 Stretching downwards into the world of men,  
 its clustering roots give rise to the bondage of *karma* (action).

In this world, its form is not understood,  
 neither its end, nor its beginning,  
 nor even its existence.  
 Cleaving this firmly rooted *Ashvattha*  
 with the powerful axe of detachment, resolving,  
 “I take sole refuge in that primal Being,  
 from whom has streamed forth this eternal activity” –  
 Seek that state, attaining which there is no return.

*Bhagavad Gītā 15:1–4*

Understanding the literal meaning of *Ashvattha* to be ‘that which does not last until tomorrow’, the Tree signifies *saṃsāra* or material existence. Here, neither the root nor the branches symbolize the eternal. The *Ashvattha* is described as “imperishable” in the sense that it rests on an endless cycle of births and deaths. The root “above” is explained by *Advaita* Vedantic commentators, such as the fourteenth-century Jñāneshvara and the twentieth-century Swāmī Nikhilānanda, as referring to *Brahman* in association with the three *guṇas* (the primary attributes of manifestation) or *māyā* (illusion), which *Advaita* Vedantists call *saguṇa Brahman* (*Brahman* with attributes). It is the source of the multiplicity of creation, symbolized by the branches of the *Ashvattha* Tree.

These spreading branches are aspects of the mind, and the secondary “clustering roots” are the latent impressions (*sanskāras*) and attachments which are both the cause and the effect of action (*karma*) in this world. These actions lead in turn to the cycle of birth and death, perpetuating the illusion of the Tree. “Detachment” from the world and taking “sole refuge” in the “primal Being” can sever the root of the Tree, and lead to liberation.

The *Ashvattha* is akin to the Tree of Life, an ancient Middle Eastern symbol of the creative Power, whose roots feed from the divine Source above and whose branches represent the creation. Middle Eastern mystic and mythological literature contains frequent references to the creative Power as the Tree of Life. The same image is even found among the clay tablets and on the pottery of the much earlier Sumerian culture of Mesopotamia, dating from perhaps 3500 BCE or earlier. Likewise, on some of the very ancient pottery found in the Indus Valley, probably dating from pre-Vedic times, there are engravings of a *pīpal* tree with two branches. The *pīpal* tree was one of the most important symbols, and perhaps deities, of the ancient Harappa and Indus culture. It is possible, therefore, that there is a link between the *Ashvattha* and ancient Middle Eastern mythology.

According to tradition, the *Bodhi* Tree (Tree of Knowledge, Tree of Wisdom, Tree of Enlightenment), beneath which the Buddha found enlightenment, was also a *pīpal* tree. Metaphorically, this is how all mystics receive enlightenment: by sitting in the ‘shadow’ of the Tree of Life – not a physical tree at all. Moreover, ‘Wisdom’, in various languages, was also an ancient Middle Eastern term for the creative Power.

See also: **pīpal** (►2), **Root, Tree of Life**.

**Audible Life Stream** The stream of life or energy that comes from the Divine, giving life and existence to the creation.

See **Life Stream**.

**Aum** (S/H) See **Om**.

**Autogenēs** (Gk) *Lit.* Self-begotten; self-born. A gnostic term, appearing in a number of ancient texts, with some variation in meaning. In general, the *Autogenēs* refers to the creative Power – the *Nous* or *Logos*. In Christian or Christianized texts, such as the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Autogenēs* is identified with the essential Christ – the power within the man, Jesus – the Word or *Logos*:

Through the Word, Christ, the divine *Autogenēs*, created the All (the creation).

*Apocryphon of John 7, NHS33 p.45*

In the *Thought of Norea*, *Autogenēs*, also called *Nous* and *Logos*, is the divine “son” of the “incomprehensible Father” and His Thought (*Ennoia*), who is a primal spiritual mother.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, *Autogenēs* is “the great *Logos*, the divine *Autogenēs*”<sup>2</sup> and:

The great invisible Spirit,  
the Father whose name cannot be uttered,  
He who came forth from the Heights of perfection,  
the Light of the light of the [*aeons* of light], ...  
the Light of the Word and the Truth, ...  
the Radiance from the *aeons* of light of the unrevealable,  
unmarked, ageless, unproclaimable Father,  
the *aeon* of the *aeons*, *Autogenēs*, self-begotten,  
self-producing, utterly other, the really true *aeon*.

*Gospel of the Egyptians* 40–41; cf. *NHS4* pp.52–55

See also: **First-born Son, Monogenēs, Only-begotten Son.**

1. *Thought of Norea* 27–28; cf. *NHS15* pp.94–97.
2. *Gospel of the Egyptians* 49, *NHS4* p.92.

**Āvāz, Āvāz-i Ḥaqq, Āvāz-i Khudā** (P) *Lit.* Voice (*Āvāz*) of God (*Ḥaqq, Khudā*); the Song of God; mystically, the divine Voice or Call, reverberating as music; the life-giving Force, the creative Power; God in dynamic action. *Āvāz* means sound, noise, echo, call, tone, song or voice in the sense of a singing or musical voice, a voice giving forth a melodious sound, as opposed to a speaking voice.

Metaphorically, the Voice of God is the Voice that spoke “*Kun!*” commanding the creation to “Be!”; it is the Voice that calls “*Irjīʿī* (Return)!” to the soul languishing in separation; it is the Voice of God speaking His own Name, *al-Isṁ al-Aʿẓam* (the Greatest Name). The Voice of God is a sound, heard not with the physical ears but with the inner faculty of hearing. This Voice has a magnetic power of attraction, pulling the hearer towards the source of the Sound: God.

Rūmī speaks of the Voice of God in a passage where the soul, ‘entombed’ in the physical body, hears the Voice of God like the trumpet of *Isrāfīl*. Just as the angel *Isrāfīl* is said to blow his trumpet on the Day of Judgment to raise the dead from their graves, so the Voice of God (*Āvāz-i Khudā*) causes the soul to wake up and to rise out of the ‘grave’ of the body. Rūmī also underlines the oneness of the perfect Man and God, saying that the voice of the Saint and the Voice of God have similar effects: they both awaken the spiritually dead:

O you who all are rotten  
 in (the world of) generation and decay,  
 your everlasting soul neither grew nor came to birth.  
 If I tell even a tittle of those notes (*naghmhā*),  
 the souls will lift up their heads from their (bodily) tombs.  
 Put your ear close, for that (Melody) is not far off,  
 but it is not permitted to convey it to you.  
 Hark! For the Saints are the *Isrāfils* of the (present) time:  
 from them to the dead comes life and freshness....  
 He (that is thus awakened) says,  
 “This Voice (*Āvāz*) is separate from other voices (*āvāz’hā*):  
 to quicken the dead is the work  
 of the Voice of God (*Āvāz-i Khudā*).  
 We had all died and were entirely decayed:  
 the Call of God (*Bāng-i Haqq*) came: we all arose.”

The Call of God (*Bāng-i Haqq*), whether it be veiled or unveiled,  
 bestows that which He bestowed on Mary from His bosom.  
 O you who are rotten with death beneath the skin,  
 return from nonexistence  
 at the Voice (*Āvāz*) of the Friend (*Dūst*)!  
 Absolutely, indeed, that Voice (*Āvāz*) is from the King (God),  
 though it be from the larynx of God’s servant.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1927–36; cf. MJR2 p.105*

Rūmī also relates a story in which Muḥammad admonishes a group of “hypocrites”, symbolizing the people of the world. He can hear the “Voice of God”, but their ears are sealed against it:

The Voice of God (*Āvāz-i Khudā*) is coming  
 into my (spiritual) ear like an echo.  
 But God has put a seal upon your (spiritual) ears,  
 so that they make no haste to hear this Voice of God (*Āvāz-i Khudā*).  
 Lo, the Voice of God (*Āvāz-i Haqq*) is coming to me distinctly:  
 it is filtered clear for me, like pure (wine) from the dregs.  
 Just as Moses from the direction of the (burning) bush  
 heard the Voice of God (*Bāng-i Haqq*) saying,  
 “O you of blessed fortune!”

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:2880–83; cf. MJR2 p.370*

See also: **Bānī, Kol, Ṣawt, Voice.**

**Āvāz-i mustaqīm** (P/U) *Lit.* straight (*mustaqīm*) Sound (*Āvāz*); *mustaqīm* implies right, straight, true, eternal; hence, the eternal Sound or Voice.

See also: **Āvāz**.

**‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt** (A), **‘Ayn-i Ḥayāt** (P) *Lit.* Essence, Source, Spring or Fountain (‘*Ayn*) of Life or Existence (*Ḥayāt*); the divine Source by which all creation comes into being; the creative Power:

In *Ṣūfī* language this metaphor denotes the inner heart’s realization of the Name of the Living One (*Ism al-Ḥayy*). Anyone receiving it will have eternal life, since he drinks a nectar from the Spring of Life (‘*Ayn al-Ḥayāt*) which keeps him eternally existent. Such a one will live by the life of God (*Ḥaqq*).

*Al-Qāshānī, Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Ṣūfīyah, ISQ p.159, in FLI p.603*

The “life” which al-Qāshānī refers to is received through a different process than coming to life through a mother’s womb. It is a life which is eternal, in which there is no death. Access to this reality is found within the human body through spiritual communion.

See also: **Āb-i Ḥayāt**.

**‘aẓmut** (He) *Lit.* essence, substance; mystically, the divine Substance or Essence – the primary Reality that penetrates and permeates all creation; used by the eighteenth-century *ḤaBaD Ḥasidim*. It is also called *Yesh* (Something) and *Yeshut* (Substance). By virtue of this Essence, the creation has unity and existence. According to *ḤaBaD*, ‘*aẓmut* is the divine creative Energy – the divine Source – into which the soul merges during *hitbodedut* (meditation).

‘*Aẓmut* and the similar term ‘*aẓmah* were used by the medieval Kabbalists to describe the unity of the *sefirot* (emanations) with the primal divine Essence itself.

See also: **al-Dhāt** (2.2), **Yesh**, **Yeshut**.

**Bachan** (H/Pu) *Lit.* word, teaching, discourse, saying, instruction, order, command; also used in the plural for words, teachings and so on, especially of some authority; mystically, the Creative Word:

The *Guru's Word (Bachan)* is ever eternal:  
 by the *Guru's Word (Bachan)*, death's noose is cut.  
 The *Guru's Word (Bachan)* remains with the soul;  
 Through the *Guru's Word (Bachan)*,  
 man gets immersed in the Lord's love.  
 Whatever the *Guru* gives – that is of use to the soul:  
 accept as true all that the Saint *Guru* does.  
 The *Guru's Word (Bachan)* is infallible and immutable:  
 by the *Guru's Word (Bachan)*, doubts and variances are dispelled.  
 The *Guru's Word (Bachan)* stays with the man, and never goes anywhere:  
 through the *Guru's Word (Bachan)*, he sings the praises of God.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 177, MMS*

And:

Standing, sitting, getting up and walking on the road and path,  
 meditate I on my Lord.  
 The true *Guru* is the Word (*Bachan*),  
 and the Word (*Bachan*) is the true *Guru*.  
 The holy Word (*Bachan*) shows the way to emancipation.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1309, MMS*

And:

The *Guru's Word (Bachan)* abides with my soul:  
 It sinks not in water, nor can a thief take it away,  
 and neither can fire burn it.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 679, MMS*

See also: **bachan** (►2).

**bād** (P) (pl. *bād'hā*) *Lit.* wind, breeze, air; also, the element of air. In Sufi poetry, wind and breeze serve to signify God's grace and His help. Metaphorically, they bring 'messages' to the lover from the divine Beloved. More specifically, the wind is the creative Power, the Spirit, the Breath or the Fragrance of God, 'breathed' into the creation to give it life and love. Hence, Rūmī says:

O you lovely breeze (*bād*) blowing from the prairie of love:  
 blow upon me that scent of the flower garden I desire.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 457:4844, KSD1 p.266, KDS1 p.210*



He also says that the unseen Spirit is like wind that blows the dust. The dust seems to be “real” and “busy”, when in fact it is “as a tool in the hand of the wind (*bād*)”; and he adds that most people only see the dust. It takes “another sort” of eye to see the wind of the Spirit:

This world of nonexistence (*nīst*)  
 seems like real Existence (*Hast*);  
 While that world of real Existence (*Hast*)  
 has become deeply hidden.  
 The dust is on the wind (*bād*): it is playing,  
 it is making a false show and forming a veil.  
 This, which seems so busy is really idle, and but a husk:  
 that which is hidden is its core and origin.

The dust is as a tool in the hand of the wind (*bād*):  
 deem the wind (*bād*) high and of high descent.  
 The gaze of the eye of dust falls on the dust:  
 an eye that sees the wind (*bād*) is of another sort.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:1280–84; cf. MJR2 p.287*

Using another analogy, Rūmī says that all the lively motion in the seeming existence of this world is from this “wind”. We think “we are all lions”, but we are so in imagination only, like the picture of lions on a banner. The lion on the banner flutters and waves gallantly as it is carried into battle. But this is really all bravado and illusion. It is the unseen wind, not the cloth itself, which has life and motion:

We and our existences are really nonexistences.  
 You are the absolute Being who manifests the perishable.  
 We are all lions, but lions on a banner:  
 because of the wind (*bād*),  
 they appear to be continually rushing onward.  
 Their onrush is visible, but the wind (*bād*) is unseen.  
 May we never lose our awareness of the Unseen!  
 Our wind (*bād*) (whereby we are moved) and our being are Your gift:  
 Our entire existence originates from Your bringing us into being.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:602–5; cf. MJR2 p.35*

Elsewhere, he uses the same imagery to illustrate how all bodily actions arise from “thought”:

The gambols of the lion on the banner  
 are indicative of winds (*bād'hā*) concealed (from view).

If there were not the movement of those winds (*bād'hā*),  
 how would the dead lion leap into the air? ...  
 This body is like the lion on the banner:  
 thought is causing it to move continually.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:3051–54, MJR4 p.440*

See also: **bād-i ṣabā**.

**bād-i ṣabā, ṣabā** (P) *Lit.* wind (*bād*) of *ṣabā*, *ṣabā* being the name for the gentle early morning breeze, the dawn wind. In Sufi symbolism, the morning, the dawn and the east (the direction from which light comes after the darkness of night) are associated with the source of divine light. Breezes, especially the east wind, are a metaphor for the Breath of God, the Power of God blowing towards man from the divine Source:

In *Šūfī* language, *bād-i ṣabā* denotes divine breaths coming from the east, (the direction) of divinity.

*Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, in FLI p.178*

Rūmī explains, “The heart’s east is the Soul of the soul of soul.”<sup>1</sup> He means the Essence of all essences, the divine spiritual Source.

Sufi poets often speak of a breeze that carries a fragrance to a dry and desolate land, or a breeze that carries messages to or from the divine Friend or Beloved. When the mystic is in communion with the Power of God, that breeze conveys to him a sweet fragrance of spirituality, connecting him in intimate communion with the divine Beloved. Hence, Ḥāfiz:

O dawn wind (*ṣabā*)! Should you happen  
 to pass by the land of the Friend (*Dūst*),  
 bring a fragrant waft of air  
 from the perfumed tresses of the Friend (*Dūst*).  
 By my soul, I will surrender my life (ego) in thanks,  
 if you bring me but a message from the Friend (*Dūst*).

*Ḥāfiz, Divān, DHA p.37, DHM (73:1–2) p.98, DIH p.90; cf. DHWC (31:1–2) p.87*

And, likewise, ‘Aṭṭār:

When the dawn wind (*ṣabā*) blows towards the prairie and garden,  
 it brings with it the musk of Khutan as booty.

*‘Aṭṭār, in FLI p.179*

Khutan is a Chinese city, famous for the exquisite fragrances of its musk. In the early morning hours of prayer and meditation, says ‘Aṭṭār, the breeze of God’s Power brings the sweet scent of His presence to the “prairie and garden” of human consciousness.

See also: **bād, Breath of God, breeze, Living Air, wind.**

1. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* IV:3046–57, *MJR4* p.440.

**Bāng-i āsmānī, Bāng-i Ḥaqq, Bāng-i ilāhī** (P) *Lit.* Call (*Bāng*) of heaven (*āsmānī*), Call of God (*Ḥaqq*), the divine (*ilāhī*) Call; the Voice of God, God’s Call; the creative Power and Vibration of God in His creation; the Call that emanates from God, creating and continuously maintaining the creation. Just as a command is uttered by mouth and yet can have far-reaching results, so too have mystics spoken of this creative Power as the Voice (*Āvāz*), the Word (*Kalām*) or the Command (*Amr* or *Ḥukm*) of God. It is a manifestation of His will in creation. It is God in dynamic action.

It is this *Bāng-i Ḥaqq* which brings spiritual life back to the spiritually dead people of this world, so dead that they are as if “decayed”. When God sends forth His mystic Call, the souls ‘arise from the dead’:

We had died and were entirely decayed:  
the Call of God (*Bāng-i Ḥaqq*) came: we all arose.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1933, MJR2 p.105*

See also: **Call.**

**Bānī** (H), **Bāṇī** (Pu) *Lit.* sound, voice, utterance, speech; verses, teachings, sayings, especially sacred books, teachings or sayings, particularly of the Saints, in poetic or musical form, whether oral or written; from the Sanskrit *vāṇī* (sound, voice, music, speech, language, words); mystically, the divine Sound, Voice or Word, where it is understood to mean the *anāhad Bānī* (unstruck Sound), the divine creative power. The term is prevalent throughout the writings of Indian mystics, either on its own or in conjunction with such epithets as *anāhad* (unstruck), *amṛit* (immortal) and *sachchī* (true):

The true Word (*Shabd*) is His immortal Sound (*Amṛit Bānī*).

*Dharamdās, Shabdāvālī, Jīvan Charitra, Chaupāī, DDS p.vi*

The Nectar Word (*Amrit Bāṇī*, immortal Sound) of the true *Guru*  
is the Quintessence (*Tatt*):

By the *Guru*'s grace, it comes to abide in the man's mind.  
Through it, the heart lotus blossoms,  
and his light blends with the supreme Light.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1423, MMS*

A divine Sound (*Bāṇī*) pervades all beings,  
but people do not know its secret.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Dariyā Sāgar, Chaupaī 917, DG2 p.92*

*Gurbāṇī* (*Bāṇī*, the Word) has become renowned in the four ages,  
and it preaches nothing but truth.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 35, MMS*

Taking on the form of a Saint,  
He (God) gives His teaching to souls.  
Using the divine Sound (*Bāṇī*) as the boat,  
He ferries them across.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 38:4.18, SBP p.339*

Come ye the beloved disciples of the true *Guru*,  
and sing the true hymns (*sachchī Bāṇī*, true Word) of the *Guru*.  
Sing ye the Word (*Bāṇī*) of the *Guru*,  
which Word (*Bāṇī*) is the most sublime of all the Words (*Bāṇī*).  
*Gurbāṇī* (Word of the *Guru*) enters the mind of those  
on whom the Lord casts His merciful glance.  
Quaff thou Nectar (*Amrit*), ever abide in God's love,  
and reflect on God, the earth sustainer.  
Says Nānak, ever hymn thou this true Word (*sachchī Bāṇī*) of the *Guru*.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 920, MMS*

And:

Controlling the mind, ascend to the inner sky,  
and listen there to the unstruck Sound (*anāhad Bāṇī*).

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 20:20.7, SBP p.166*

The Sanskrit, *Vāṇī*, is also a title of *Sarasvatī*, the Hindu goddess of learning.

See also: **bānī** (►2), **Speech, Voice**.

**Beginning** (Gk. *Archē*, He. *Reshit*) The start of something; hence, the Creative Word.

See **Archē**, **Reshit**.

**Bread, Bread from heaven, Bread of God, Bread of Life, Bread of understanding** Expressions used by biblical and Middle Eastern mystics for the Word of God. Just as the body requires the nourishment of this world in order to remain alive, so too does the soul continue in existence through being fed from the source of life – the Word. Since the physical staff of life is often symbolized as ‘bread’, so the Word became known as the Bread of Life, Bread from heaven and so on.

In the Bible, the Bread of Life first appears as the *manna* from heaven which was fed to the children of Israel in the desert. Interpreted symbolically, the story is an allegory in which the desert is this world, Moses is the Saviour, and the *manna* is the Word which gives spiritual food to the soul. This is how Philo Judaeus, the early-first-century Jewish philosopher, understands the *Exodus* story. The *manna* is the “*Logos*”, the “bread ... given to the soul”:

This is the teaching of the hierophant and prophet, Moses, who will say: “This is the Bread, the food which God has given to the soul,”<sup>1</sup> for it to feed on, His own Word, His own *Logos*; for this Bread which He has given us to eat is this Word.

*Philo Judaeus, Allegorical Interpretation III:60; cf. PCW1 pp.416–19, TGH1 p.247*

And, equating “Bread from heaven” with Wisdom, another term for the creative Power:

The earthly food is produced with the co-operation of husbandmen, but the heavenly is sent like the snow by God, the solely self-acting, with none to share His work. And indeed it says “Behold I rain upon you Bread from heaven.”<sup>2</sup> Of what food can He rightly say that it is rained from heaven, save of heavenly Wisdom, which is sent from above on souls which yearn for virtue by Him who sheds the gift of prudence in rich abundance, whose grace waters the universe?

*Philo Judaeus, On the Change of Names 44, PCW5 pp.274–75*

And again:

This is the heavenly nourishment, and it is indicated as such in the sacred records, when the First Cause (God) in His own person says,

“Lo, it is I that am raining upon you Bread out of the heaven.”<sup>3</sup> For in very deed God drops, from above, the ethereal Wisdom upon minds which are by nature apt, and take delight in contemplation. And they see it and taste it and are filled with pleasure, being fully aware of what they feel, but wholly ignorant of the cause which produced the feeling. So they inquire, “‘What is this’,<sup>4</sup> which has a nature making it sweeter than honey and whiter (purer) than snow?” And they will be taught by the seer (Moses) that, “This is the Bread, which the Lord hath given them to eat.”<sup>5</sup>

Tell me, then, of what kind the Bread is. “This Saying (Word),” he says, “which the Lord ordained.”<sup>6</sup> This divine Ordinance fills the soul that has vision with ... both light and sweetness, flashing forth the radiancy of Truth and, with the honeyed grace of persuasion, imparting sweetness to those who hunger and thirst after nobility of character.

*Philo Judaeus, On Flight and Finding 25, PCW5 pp.82–85*

Philo’s comments help to make sense of some of the sayings attributed to Jesus. The best known usage of the metaphor in the New Testament is in St John. According to the story, Jesus is asked by the Jews to show them a sign, proving who he is:

They said therefore unto him,  
 “What sign shewest thou then, that we may see,  
 and believe thee? What dost thou work?  
 Our fathers did eat *manna* in the desert:  
 as it is written, ‘He gave them Bread from heaven to eat.’”

*John 6:30–31, KJV*

The Jews are referring to the story of the children of Israel who were given “*manna*” or “Bread from heaven” when lost in the desert. This style of dialogue is characteristic of John’s gospel, where the writer is simply providing himself with the opportunity to explain the real meaning of the story and the “Bread from heaven”. According to his narrative, Jesus then replies:

Then Jesus said unto them,  
 “Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
 Moses gave you not that Bread from heaven,  
 but my Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven.  
 For the Bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven,  
 and giveth life unto the world (the creation).”

Then said they unto him,  
 “Lord, evermore give us this Bread.”

And Jesus said unto them,  
“I am the Bread of Life:  
he that cometh to me shall never hunger,  
and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

*John 6:32–35, KJV*

John’s gospel is characteristically symbolic. As a number of scholars have pointed out, even the stories are usually told not as history, but for their symbolic or spiritual significance, as parables. Moreover, the ‘I’ that speaks in John’s gospel is essentially the *Logos*, rather than the man Jesus. Hence, Jesus says that since Moses is no longer with them, he cannot give them the true Bread from heaven. The Bread of God, he says, is “he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world”. This is a reference to the Word as the source of life, the Life Stream. Again, according to the symbolic story, the Jews conveniently ask, “Lord, evermore give us this Bread,” and Jesus points out, “I am the Bread of Life.” He is the “Word made flesh”, a personification of the Word, a Saviour from whom this Bread is available. Consequently, Jesus continues:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.  
I am that Bread of Life.  
Your fathers did eat *manna* in the wilderness, and are dead.  
This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven,  
that a man may eat thereof, and not die.  
I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven:  
if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever.”

*John 6:47–51, KJV*

He says that anyone who eats the Bread of Life will not die. Clearly, he does not mean that they will not die in a physical sense, since this is the fate of everybody in this world, whoever they may be. Even those who ate the *manna* in the wilderness died. So he must mean that by being nourished on this Bread, the souls will realize their own immortality and will be enabled to reach eternity, where they will “live for ever”.

The term appears elsewhere in Jewish literature. In the biblical Wisdom literature, the creative Power is commonly called Wisdom (He. *Hokhmah*, Gk. *Sophia*). In the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*, Wisdom is also called the “Bread of understanding” and the “Water of Wisdom”:

She (Wisdom) will give him the Bread of understanding to eat,  
and the Water of Wisdom to drink.

He will lean on her and will not fall,  
 he will rely on her and not be put to shame....  
 He will find happiness and a crown of joy,  
 he will inherit an everlasting name.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 15:3–4, 6, JB*

See also: **food and drink of the soul, manna.**

1. *cf. Exodus 14:15.*
2. *Exodus 16:4.*
3. *Exodus 16:4.*
4. *Exodus 16:15.*
5. *Exodus 16:15.*
6. *Exodus 16:16.*

**Breath of God, Breath of His Mouth, Breath of Life, Breath of the aeons, Breath of the Air, Breath of the Living, Breath of the Spirit, Breath of the Wind** Expressions for the Word, found particularly in Judaic, Christian and allied Middle Eastern literature. Terms for wind, breath and air were often used synonymously as images for the Spirit, the words for wind, breath and Spirit being the same in Greek (*pneuma*), Hebrew (*ruah*) and other Semitic languages.

Spirit is called breath because breath in the body is indicative of life. Likewise, the mystic Breath that brings life and being to the creation is the mystic, Creative Word that emanates (metaphorically) from the Mouth of God. Spirit is called wind or air because air is the most refined of the observable states of material substance. Similarly, spirit is the subtlest essence in creation, pervading all, yet invisible to the physical senses. Again, the wind makes a rushing or sighing sound, yet no one can see it, nor can it be said with any certainty where or when the wind arises or where it will go. Likewise, the Spirit is audible, but no one can determine when this mystic Sound will come to him. Further, a light wind brings welcome coolness from the heat of the sun, just as the Spirit cools the mind and comforts the soul made captive in the burning furnace of the sensual world. Metaphors such as Breath of God, Breath of Life and so on, are therefore rich in symbolic imagery.

The earliest occurrence of such terms in biblical literature is in the second of the two creation myths found at the beginning of *Genesis*:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the Breath of Life; and man became a living soul.

*Genesis 2:7, KJV*



The same expression is also found in the story of Noah's Ark, where it is used in three very similar instances:

And, behold, I (God), even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the Breath of Life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

*Genesis 6:17, KJV; cf. Genesis 7:15, 22*

The mystical and allegorical meaning of these passages is brought out by the first-century, mystically minded Jewish philosopher, Philo Judaeus. Speaking of the *Logos*, he writes:

(Moses) called (it) the Breath of God,<sup>1</sup> because breath is the most life-giving thing (in the creation), and God is the author of life.

*Philo Judaeus, On the World's Creation 8; cf. PCW1 pp.22–23, TGH1 p.232*

And again:

The body, then, has been formed out of earth, but the soul is of the upper aether, a particle detached from God: "For God breathed into his face a Breath of Life, and man became a living soul."<sup>2</sup>

*Philo Judaeus, Allegorical Interpretation III:55; cf. PCW1 pp.408–9, TGH1 p.246*

The Breath of Life and similar terms are found in a number of biblical books. Just as it is the Word, proceeding out of the 'Mouth' of God, which forms and continuously maintains and administers the creation; just as it is His Voice or Command by which everything is accomplished and comes into being; so too did the mystics of old speak of God's "Breath", emanating from His "Mouth", as the creative Power by which all things are formed. There is a good example of this usage in the canonical *Psalms*:

*Yahweh's love fills the earth.  
By the Word of Yahweh the heavens were made,  
their whole array by the Breath of His Mouth;  
He collects the ocean waters as though in a wineskin,  
he stores the deeps in cellars.*

*Let the whole world fear Yahweh,  
let all who live on earth revere him!  
He spoke, and it was created;  
He commanded, and there it stood.*

*Psalms 33:5–9, JB*

Similarly, in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the creative Power is described as the “Breath of the Power of God:

She (Wisdom) is a Breath of the Power of God,  
pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty.

*Wisdom of Solomon 7:25, JB*

Metaphors involving breath and wind are also used in a number of places in the *Song of Songs*. The soul, for instance, describing herself as the Beloved’s garden, begs for the “wind” – the Spirit – to “breathe”<sup>3</sup> over her garden, spreading out its sweet ‘fragrance’, another commonly encountered term for the Holy Spirit.

Another passage in the *Song of Songs*, which alludes to both the breath and fragrance of the creative Power, describes the mystic Beloved as ascending from the desert of the material world like a “column of smoke”. The allusion here is to the columns or pillars of cloud and fire (sound and light) which led the Saviour Moses and the children of Israel (the souls) on their flight from Egypt (the material universe):<sup>4</sup>

What (who) is this coming up from the desert  
like a column of smoke,  
breathing of myrrh and frankincense  
and every perfume the merchant knows?

*Song of Songs 3:6, JB*

This passage is reflected in the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*, where Wisdom is described in precisely the same manner:

I (Wisdom) have exhaled a perfume like cinnamon and acacia,  
I have breathed out a scent like choice myrrh,  
like galbanum, onycha and stacte,  
like the smoke of incense in the tabernacle.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 24:15, JB*

The ‘breathing of Spirit’ into the soul is a common image in the ancient mystic literature of the Middle East. It is found, for example, in the *Acts of Thomas*, where – in a prayer for spiritual help and support – Judas Thomas speaks of Jesus as:

(You) who breathe your own Power into us,  
and encourage us and give us confidence  
in love unto your own servants.

*Acts of Thomas 81; cf. ANT p.401*

A soul who has been even slightly touched by divine love understands the feeling of confidence and contentedness it brings. The mind and soul are comforted and warmed, held secure; the mind and its scattering tendencies are held in check and the lower self or ego is increasingly forgotten as the attention becomes focused upon that which is higher. The “Power” of the Spirit is “breathed” into a soul from within.

Similarly, in one of the post-resurrection stories in John’s gospel, the disciples are said to receive the influx of the Holy Ghost when Jesus’ “breathed on them”, an instance of John’s use of symbolism to convey his meaning. Jesus says:

“Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me,  
even so send I you.”  
And when he had said this, he breathed on them,  
and saith unto them,  
“Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

*John 20:21–22, KJV*

This breath is no physical breathing, but an infusion of the Spirit from within.

In the gnostic writings of the Nag Hammadi library, there are frequent references to the wind, the breath and the air. In the *Gospel of Truth*, for example, the author writes that the “Thought” or essence of the Father is “breathed” into the sleeping soul by the Spirit.<sup>5</sup> The same writer also says that the eternal One – “Incorruptibility” – “breathed forth” in order to provide forgiveness for the sinner. The writer expresses this in a charming fashion, saying that just as it is the nature of a physician to seek out one who is sick, so too is it the nature of the Spirit to seek out those who feel the need of forgiveness:

It is for this reason that Incorruptibility breathed forth; it pursued the one who had sinned in order that he (the sinner) might (find) rest. For nothing else but forgiveness remains for the Light when it comes to the deficiency (the creation) as the Word of the All. Just as the physician runs to the place where sickness is, because that is his nature.

*Gospel of Truth 35:25–34; cf. NHS22 pp.106–7*

Likewise, in a poetic passage from the *Tripartite Tractate*, the author describes the Son (the creative Power) as the manifestation, the expression or the embodiment of the Father. Among many other descriptive phrases, the Son is

the Breath of those who breathe,  
the Life of those who live.

*Tripartite Tractate 66, NHS22 pp.216–17*

In another extract from the same text, the Spirit is graphically described as that “which breathes in the Totalities (the creation)”; that is, it is both the life and the movement within all the realms of creation. It is also that which draws souls to God, which “puts into them the idea of seeking after the unknown One”:

It is by virtue of His will that the Father, the One who is exalted, is known; that is, by virtue of the Spirit which breathes in the Totalities. And it (this Spirit) puts into them the idea of seeking after the unknown One, just as a person is drawn by a pleasant fragrance to search for that from which the fragrance arises. For the Fragrance of the Father surpasses all ordinary fragrances.

*Tripartite Tractate 71–72, NHS22 pp.226–27*

Again, speaking of the creative Power which brings life to the creation, the same author writes:

This is what the prophet called the ‘Living Spirit’ and the ‘Breath of the exalted *aeons* (realms)’ and ‘the Invisible’.

*Tripartite Tractate 105, NHS22 pp.282–83*

He gives no indication, however, of which prophet he refers to.

The juxtaposition of ‘breath’ and ‘Spirit’, apparent in many of these excerpts, is readily understandable when it is realized that most, if not all, of them have come from the Greek or Hebrew where the same word is used for both, providing an opportunity for wordplay. Hence, the writer of the *Gospel of Philip*, alluding to the *Genesis* allegory, says that the soul of man came into being through this Breath, which is the spiritual partner or essence of man:

The soul of Adam (man) came into being  
by means of a Breath.

The partner of his soul is the Spirit.

*Gospel of Philip 70, NHS20 pp.182–83*

The Manichaean psalmists also used the same family of metaphors. In one psalm, the writer describes how everything in creation, being a part of God, “renders glory unto this imperishable one, the sage, the Paraclete”, the Master. Among these is the “Breath of the Wind”:

The mountains of the earth, the rivers ...  
the waters, the four worlds, ...

the blossoming trees, the gardens of Fragrance,  
 and the Breath of the Wind –  
 They render glory unto this imperishable one,  
 the sage, the Paraclete.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXXVII; cf. MPB p.39*

Everything in creation is continuously projected and maintained out of this great Power, and consequently everything is a part of the blissful dance thus created. The very existence of creation gives glory to its Creator. And to the human soul who has come to know this Power only through a mediator – “the sage, the Paraclete” – all worship and love is directed to him.

Developing the metaphor still further, if the Spirit is symbolized by “Air”, then the negative power is the unclean or murky air, the “smoke” obscuring the Light, the unclear and sooty mental atmosphere pervading the physical universe. Similarly, if the Spirit is the revitalizing “Wind”, then the negative power is the destructive wind, the “storm”, the tempestuous surging of the senses, the emotions and the mind, and its expression in the daily events and happenings of material existence. Likewise, the reverse of light is darkness, the experience of most people when they try to look within. Again, while water can bring life to the desert, it can also bring death by inundation and drowning, by being submerged in the floods and storms of worldly activity and desire.

All these images are employed by the poet in the following Manichaean psalm, where the underlying theme is that the negative power and all lesser powers are overcome by the Word, the “Air”, the “Wind”, the “Light”, the “Waters”, the “Breath of the Wind” or the “Breath of the Air”. All the powers of darkness are conquered by the one who is attached to the Living Word of God:

The Air is set over the smoke:  
     its hosts are bound, they are fettered.  
 The Wind guards the king of the storm:  
     his host is bound, it is fettered.  
 The Light is set over the king of the darkness:  
     his host is bound, it is fettered.  
 Lo, the Waters have shut in  
     the king of the inundation of death.  
 The Maiden, the Living Fire,  
     she is become mistress over the land of darkness.  
 Lo, we have laid waste the land of darkness:  
     we are waiting for you with the garland....

The robe of light was set upon them (the powers of darkness),  
 it was a bond and a shackle on them.  
 They lusted after the Breath of the Wind,  
 it was a fetter on their neck.  
 They smelt the Breath of the Air,  
 it was death to them all.

*Psalms of Heracleidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB pp.201–2*

Similar images are also found in one of the Manichaean *Psalms of Thomas* where the psalmist is writing of the creation by the “Father of Greatness”:

He evoked clouds of Brightness,  
 dropping down Dew and Life.  
 He summoned a holy Fire, giving a sweet burning.

He evoked a Wind and an Air,  
 breathing the Breath of the Living.  
 He evoked holy Mountains, sending up fragrant roots.

*Psalms of Thomas I, Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.203*

Likewise, in an incident when Mānī takes the disbelieving King Mihrshāh into the inner realms, the latter experiences the “immortal Breath of Life”:

By his miraculous power he showed him the paradise of light with all gods, divine beings and the immortal Breath of Life and every kind of garden and also other splendid things there. Thereafter, he fell to the ground unconscious (of this world) for three hours, and what he saw he kept as a memory in his heart.

*Manichaean Text, HR2 p.82ff., MBB p.103, RMP f, ML p.20*

Similar metaphors are again found in the allied Mandaean writings. In one song, for instance, the “Breath of Life” is equated with the “Voice of Life” and the “great Beam which is all light”. *Mandā-ḡ-Hiia* is one of the mythical Saviours of Mandaean literature:

The building that was built for you in the house of Life  
 will not come to nought in an age of ages!  
 And may some of *Mandā-ḡ-Hiia*’s radiance and light  
 and the revivifying Breath of Life rest upon us!  
 Blessed is the Voice of Life  
 and praised be the great Beam which is all light.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 70, CPM p.57*

See also: **bād**, **breathing of the Holy Spirit** (►2), **Living Air**, **Nafas**, **pneuma**, **ruah** (5.1), **wind**.

1. cf. *Genesis* 2:7, 6:17, 7:15, 7:22.
2. *Genesis* 2:7.
3. *Song of Songs* 4:16.
4. *Exodus* 13:21ff.
5. *Gospel of Truth* 30, *NHS22* pp.100–1.

**breeze** A word occasionally used in translation for terms that refer to the Word as the Wind or Living Air. Terms for wind, spirit and breath were the same in Greek (*pneuma*) and Hebrew (*ruah*) and other Semitic languages. In some, the word for fragrance was also derived from the same root. As a consequence, a large number of imaginative variants were used by the mystic poets of the ancient Middle East, as well as by later Sufis, in their descriptions of the Word.

In a Manichaean text, for instance, the creative Power is described as the “immortal, fragrant Breeze”. Here, the “gods”, the “earth and (its) trees”, “blessed plants” and “bright mountains of divine nature” are all allusions to the spiritual realms. They are “echoing” because the divine Song resounds there:

The immortal, fragrant Breeze attends the gods,  
together with the earth and (its) trees –  
The source of light, the blessed plants,  
the echoing, bright mountains of divine nature.  
The house of the jewels is a place full of blossoms,  
with countless lands, houses and thrones.

*Manichaean Hymns, PP p.645, RMP aka, GSR pp.32–33:6.1*

The twentieth-century scholar, Geo Widengren, paraphrases a description of the lost Manichaean hymn, the *Song of the Lovers*, provided by St Augustine (who was once a Manichaean). Here, the “health-giving Breeze ... through which nectar perpetually flowed” is the divine Spirit or creative Power:

In the realm of light there prevailed utter peace and harmony. The beauty of the Father, wreathed with flowers, was described in rapturous words. Twelve *aeons*, sheathed in flowers too, stood before and heaped Him with further blossoms.... A health-giving Breeze was wafted across the heavenly regions through which nectar perpetually flowed.

*Geo Widengren, on St Augustine, Against Faustus XV:5.6, MM p.47*

See also: **bād, wind.**

**Bud, everlasting Bud** An image derived from the Tree of Life, the True Vine and so on, as metaphors for the Creative Word or for the Saviour, as a bud or branch of the Tree of Life; used particularly in Mandaean texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

See also: **Living Water, Tree of Life, True Vine.**

**Call, Call of Life** Mystically, the Creative Word or Voice of God which calls souls back to their eternal home. The term is often found in allegorical form, where the Word is calling souls to relinquish the desires and attractions of this world, and to turn their attention to God. In the biblical *Proverbs*, Wisdom is the divine Call or Cry. She is the omnipresent Power which draws the souls of human beings back to God. But the writer cloaks the meaning in *double entendre*:

Does Wisdom not call meanwhile?  
Does discernment not lift up her voice?  
On the hilltop, on the road,  
    at the crossways, she takes her stand;  
Beside the gates of the city,  
    at the approaches to the gates she cries aloud:

“O men! I am calling to you;  
My cry goes out to the sons of men.  
You ignorant ones! Study discretion;  
And you fools, come to your senses!  
Listen, I have serious things to tell you,  
    from my lips come honest words.  
My mouth proclaims the truth,  
    wickedness is hateful to my lips.  
All the words I say are right,  
    nothing twisted is in them, nothing false,  
    all straightforward to him who understands,  
    honest to those who know what knowledge means.  
Accept my discipline rather than silver,  
    knowledge in preference to pure gold.  
For Wisdom is more precious than pearls,  
    and nothing else is so worthy of desire.”

*Proverbs 8:1–11, JB*



This passage can be taken at face value for its more obvious meaning. But some of the metaphors seem to have been carefully chosen to convey an inner meaning too. Wisdom calls “on the hilltop”: she is calling from the heights of God. She calls “on the road”: she is the road or path leading back to Him. She resides “at the crossways”: at the crossroads of the human form where an individual may choose the path to God or the path of materiality.

The “city” with its gates is also the human form. The gateways are the avenues which the individual may take – either out into the world or inwards towards God. Wisdom calls from close by, “at the approaches to the gates”: she is within every human being. It is there that Wisdom can be heard; it is there that “she takes her stand” and “cries aloud”. She is the mystic Truth; nothing about her is deceitful or illusory. Her ‘speech’ can always be trusted for she is the power of God Himself. She is “more precious than pearls”.

Those who are to follow the path of Wisdom are automatically attracted to it. Ultimately, they cannot resist the pull and the attraction. But for those who do not follow this call of Wisdom, the same writer says:

Wisdom calls aloud in the streets,  
     she raises her voice in the public squares;  
 She calls out at the street corners,  
     she delivers her message at the city gates:

“You ignorant people, how much longer  
     will you cling to your ignorance?  
 How much longer will mockers revel in their mocking,  
     and fools hold knowledge (of God) contemptible?  
 Pay attention to my warning:  
     now I will pour out my heart to you,  
     and tell you what I have to say.

“Since I have called and you have refused me,  
     since I have beckoned and no one has taken notice,  
     since you have ignored all my advice,  
     and rejected all my warnings,  
 I, for my part, will laugh at your distress.  
 I will jeer at you when calamity comes,  
     when calamity bears down on you like a storm  
     and your distress like a whirlwind,  
     when disaster and anguish bear down on you.

“Then they shall call to me, but I will not answer,  
     they shall seek me eagerly and shall not find me.

They despised knowledge (of God),  
 they had no love for the face of *Yahweh*,  
 they would take no advice from me,  
 and spurned all my warnings:  
 So they must eat the fruits of their own courses,  
 and choke themselves with their own scheming.  
 For the errors of the ignorant lead to their death,  
 and the complacency of fools works their own ruin.

“But whoever listens to me may live secure,  
 he will have quiet (rest), fearing no mischance.”

*Proverbs 1:20–33, JB*

As before, Wisdom calls out to every soul, for she is within everyone. But the spiritually dense, who ignore all inner promptings, will meet a just reward through the law of recompense. Though the workings of this law are administered by the devil or negative power, the prime mover who gives the law its energy is Wisdom, the creative Power. Whether descending into the “death” of this world or rising to the heights of eternity, all souls draw their life and energy from Wisdom.

These passages from *Proverbs* are echoed in the early Christian *Odes of Solomon* where Wisdom is depicted as a “perfect Virgin” who calls souls to leave the way of the “Corrupter” – the devil or negative power:

But a perfect Virgin (Wisdom) stood,  
 proclaiming and crying out, saying,  
 “O you sons of men, return!  
 and you, their daughters, come!  
 Forsake the ways of that Corrupter,  
 and draw near to me.  
 And I will enter into you,  
 and will bring you out from perdition,  
 and make you wise in the ways of Truth.

“Be not corrupted, nor perish:  
 hear me, and be saved;  
 For I bring the grace of God to you,  
 and through me you will be saved,  
 and become blessed.  
 I am your armour,  
 and they who clothe themselves in me  
 will not be vanquished;  
 But will obtain incorruption in the new world.

“O my chosen ones, walk in me!  
And I will make known my ways  
to them that seek me,  
and will cause them to trust in my Name.”

*Odes of Solomon 33:5–13*

Wisdom cries out that she will “enter into” her devotees, those who repent or turn away from the world. She will draw them out from the entanglements of the “Corrupter”, from the place of change, decay and “perdition” – spiritual ruin.

The Manichaean psalms are also full of references to the Word as the Call. In one, the personified Call or Voice describes the mission of salvation as the action of the “Mother of the Living” – the Holy Spirit, the Word – and of “her Brethren” – the Saviours, those who are ‘kin’ to the Word:

“What does the Mother of the Living do,  
whom I left, and her Brethren also?  
Tell the news.” ...

And the Call answered: ...

“I came forth, the *aeons* (inner realms and powers) being gathered,  
being a garland about the Father.  
I was sent, the Father rejoicing,  
He being in the bride chamber of the land of light,  
that I might tell the news....

“I was sent, the Air (Spirit) rejoicing,  
being gathered, surrounding the Father,  
that I might tell the news.  
I was sent, the bride chamber rejoicing,  
and the land of light, and the house of the Father.  
Lo, this is the news of the skies (inner realms)....

“I was sent, the Mother watching,  
her Brethren gathered unto her.  
Lo, this is the news....

“I was sent, the Father rejoicing,  
gladness surrounding him.  
Lo, this is the news.”

*Psalms of Heracleidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.199*

The Mandaeans, too, used the same imagery in their writings. In one poem, the Saviour – or Word – speaks of his summons to go to the physical

universe, to call souls to himself, “to voice the Call of Life”, and to take them back to God. In this passage, the “Voice of Life” is also called the divine “Command”, Order or Will, “Life” being a Mandaean term for God:

Life summoned me ... and some of His serenity  
 He imparted to my mind.  
 He issued a Command,  
 and they clothed me with radiance,  
 brought me light that was powerful,  
 and covered me therewith.  
 They armed me with their armour and gave command;  
 To the earth they sent me  
 to voice the Call of Life....  
 To smoothen a road for the good,  
 to prepare a path for the believing;  
 To make plain and lift up probity to its place,  
 and to leave dross behind at its proper place.  
 To deliver the whole congregation of souls,  
 (the souls) of Nāṣōraeans and Madaeans,  
 so that the Sinner (the Evil One, the devil)  
 may have no power over them.

I set forth: with my radiance that is great  
 I came to this world:  
 I called with the Voice of Life.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 161, CPM pp.138–39*

But, as another Mandaean poem says, only those who are destined to hear the Call will come:

The Voice of Life calls:  
 and the ears of the chosen hearken.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 155; cf. CPM p.134*

See also: **Bāng-i āsmānī, Cry, Nidā’.**

**cedar** See **Tree of Life.**

**ch’áng Míng (cháng Míng) (C)** *Lit.* eternal (*ch’áng*) Name (*Míng*); the constant Name; the all-pervading, unnamable creative Energy that abides forever.

*Ch'áng Míng* is synonymous with *Tào*, both being used to describe the creative Power within all things. Words, however, cannot describe what It really is:

The *Tào* which can be spoken of is not the eternal *Tào*;  
The name which can be named is not the eternal Name (*ch'áng Míng*).

*Lǎo Tzu, Tào Té Chīng 1, LTTN p.51*

See also: **ch'áng** (2.1), **al-Ism al-A'zam**, **Nām**, **Name**, **Shem**, **Tào** (2.2).

**Chashmah-'i Āb-i Ḥayāt** (P) *Lit.* Fountain or Spring (*Chashmah*) of the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayāt*).

See also: **Āb-i Ḥayāt**, **Fountain**, **al-Kawthar**, **Spring**.

**Chashmah-'i Kawṣar** (P) *Lit.* Fountain or Spring (*Chashmah*) of Abundance (*Kawṣar*); a freshwater spring in paradise, according to Islamic mythology, from which all heavenly rivers flow.

See **al-Kawthar**.

**Chashmah-'i Khiḡr**, **Chashmah-'i Zindagānī** (P) *Lit.* Fountain or Spring (*Chashmah*) of Life (*Zindagānī*); the Fountain or Spring of *Khiḡr*; mystically, the life-giving 'Water' of Immortality. *Khiḡr*, sometimes called the Green One or the Green Man, is the mysterious and legendary Saint, said to have been such a fount of life that green plants sprang up in the desert sands wherever he set foot. He had drunk from the Fountain of Life, and had become eternally alive and eternally life-giving. Sufis have thus spoken metaphorically of the creative Power of God as the Fountain of *Khiḡr*. In a poem expressing his longing to meet the Lord, the eighteenth-century Punjabi mystic, Bulleh Shāh alludes to the death of Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj, a famous Sufi who was tortured and executed for having asserted, "I am God (*anā al-Ḥaq*)":

I have drunk from the cup of that Truth,  
which Maṣṣūr had quaffed to the dregs.  
When I had a glimpse of that ascension,  
I washed in water from the Fountain of *Khiḡr*.  
O my Beloved, why do you tarry?

*Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt 114, KBS pp.248–49, SBSU p.402; cf. BS p.394*

In *‘Aql-i Surkh (Red Wisdom)*, an essay by the well-known Persian Sufi, Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, the Spring of Life is described in a story:

I asked the *Pīr* (Master), “What should I do to make the pain (of death) easy?” He said, “Reach the Spring of Life (*Chashmah-i Zindagānī*), and from it pour water over your head so this armour (the body) will shrink. When the armour is small, then the wound of the blade will be light.”

I asked, “O *Pīr*, where is the Spring of Life (*Chashmah-i Zindagānī*)?” He said, “In the darkness. If you seek that, put on appropriate shoes (*i.e.* meditate) like *Khizr*, and follow the path of trust (in God) until you reach darkness.”

I asked, “Which direction should I follow?” He said, “If you keep walking, from any direction you go, you will reach it.”

I asked, “What is the sign of darkness?” He said, “Blackness. And you yourself already are in darkness (in the world and the body), but you don’t know it. One who walks on this path, when seeing oneself in the dark, understands that he has always been in darkness and has never seen the light.... And the seeker of the Spring of Life will wander a lot, but finally will see the light within the darkness.”

*Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, ‘Aql-i Surkh, AS pp.236–37*

He says that the Spring of Life is to be found in the “darkness”. Here, the “darkness” is used with a double meaning. He is referring to a belief in the hereafter as *Ẓulamāt* (*lit.* darkness), a place of darkness where the Spring of Immortality is found. He is also speaking of the darkness which man experiences within himself.

See also: **Āb-i Ḥayāt, Āb-i Khizr, amṛit sar** (4.1), **Fountains, al-Kawthar, mānsarovar** (4.1), **Spring**.

**Chintāmaṇi** (S/H), **Chintāmani** (Pu) *Lit.* gem or jewel (*maṇi*) of worry or anxiety (*chintā*); wish-fulfilling jewel; a mythical jewel, which is said to remove all worries, pains and anxieties by fulfilling all the wishes of its owner. Indian mystics have described human life, the Master, the creative Power and even God Himself as a *Chintāmaṇi*. Referring to Ajāmil, a dissolute *brāhmaṇ* of Hindu mythology who was saved from hell by coincidentally mentioning the name of the god, *Nārāyaṇ*, on his death bed, Guru Tegh Bahādur writes:

Ajāmil, a known sinner in the world, in an instant was redeemed.  
Says Nānak, remember thou the Jewel

which grants all wishes (*Chintāmani*),  
and thou too shalt be ferried across.  
*Guru Tegh Bahādur, Ādi Granth 632, MMS*

And:

I pray for one thing more:  
the desire-fulfiller Gem (*Chintāmani*) of Thy devotion.  
Show me not the wicked and the sinner.  
*Ravidās, Ādi Granth 486, MMS*

See also: **jewels, pearl.**

**Command** An order, decree or mandate; mystically, both the creative Power and the teaching concerning it. The creative Power or Word is the Command of God in the sense that it is the manifestation of His Will, Command or Order in creation. The term is used, for instance, in the psalms from the Dead Sea Scrolls:

None of those who approach Thee  
rebels against Thy Command;  
Nor do any of those who know Thee  
alter Thy words;  
For Thou art righteous,  
and all Thine elect are truth.  
*Thanksgiving Hymns VI:14–15 (4), CDSS p.248*

Rebelling against “Thy Command” is the same as ‘blasphemy against the Holy Ghost’ of Matthew’s gospel.<sup>1</sup> The mind can go in only two directions: towards the Lord or towards the creation. Turning towards the Lord is repentance, turning towards the creation is ‘blasphemy’ or rebellion against God’s will – His Command, His Word or His Holy Ghost.

See also: **al-Amr, al-Ḥukm, Law.**

1. *Matthew 12:31, KJV.*

**Commandment** A command or order, particularly a divine command. Though the literal meaning of the word is an injunction to behave or not to behave in a certain manner, the term has been used in a general sense as a ‘teaching’, as in the New Testament letter attributed to John the Elder:

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you,  
 but an old Commandment, which ye had from the beginning.  
 The old Commandment is the Word,  
 which ye have heard from the beginning.

*1 John 2:7, KJV*

The “old Commandment is the Word” means that the teaching is both *of* the Word and ultimately *is* the Word itself. The term is also used with the same intentional ambiguity of meaning in John’s gospel, where the same writer has Jesus say:

For I have not spoken of myself;  
 But the Father which sent me,  
 He gave me a Commandment,  
 what I should say, and what I should speak.  
 And I know that His Commandment is life everlasting:  
 Whatsoever I speak therefore,  
 even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

*John 12:49–50, KJV*

Again, the “Commandment” is both the teaching given by Jesus as well as the Word itself – the “Commandment (that) is life everlasting”.

It is certainly in this sense that the term is found in some other mystical writings. In the Manichaeian psalms, the psalmist, speaking of the Word as the “Commandment” or Law, and making allusions to many of the well-known parables of Jesus, describes the Word and its manifestation as a Master or Saviour as a “Tree” – the Tree of Life – in the desert of this world:

The Commandment and the faith  
 have enlightened my inner being....  
 The Commandment has drawn me to the good way.  
 The Commandment has drawn me to the straight way.

He came like a Shepherd,  
 gathering unto him all his sheep....  
 Our good Shepherd who feeds us by his Commandment....

The Commandment was a Tree, my soul was soil for it:  
 good the soil, good the Tree (of Life),  
 good the fruit, good the taste also.  
 The Commandment was a sailor, my soul was a ship:



good the ship, good the sailor,  
 good also the Wind (Spirit) that blows.  
 The Commandment was a Tree, the Commandment was an ark....

It was Bread for them that hungered;  
 It was Water for them that thirsted.  
 It was Resurrection for the dead:  
     they arose from death,  
     they came to Life.  
 It was a Stair for them that go to the Light;  
 It was a Ladder for them that are drawn to the Height....  
 It was a Tree in the desert;  
 It was an Ark in the flood.  
 It was a Path for them that wandered....  
 It was a Tree in the God of Truth;  
 It was a Ship in the ships of light....

My brethren, let us be joyful,  
 for we also have moored to this Commandment.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB pp.175–77*

See also: **Command, Law.**

**Conversation, Converse** Terms sometimes used to translate words which allude to the audibility of the Creative Word or the Voice of God, as in the *Song of Songs* when the lover says of the Beloved:

His conversation is sweetness itself,  
 he is altogether lovable.

*Song of Songs 5:16, JB*

Understood mystically, the lines convey a double meaning, referring both to the inner, mystic ‘Conversation’ of the soul with the Word – as well as to the sweetness of human interaction and conversation with a mystic who is the Word personified.

Many centuries later, the first-century writer of the *Odes of Solomon* speaks metaphorically of the abundant sweetness which comes to him from his “intimate converse” with God:

As honey drips from the honeycomb of bees,  
 and milk flows from the woman who loves her children,  
 so too is my hope in Thee, my God.

As water pours out from a spring,  
 so the praise of the Lord pours out from my heart,  
 and my lips utter praise to Him.

My tongue becomes sweet in His intimate converse,  
 and my heart expands in His psalms.<sup>1</sup>  
 My face rejoices in His gladness,  
 my spirit delights in His love,  
 and my soul shines in Him.

*Odes of Solomon 40:1–4*

In the Mandaean writings, the true nature of this “Converse” is made explicit – it is the “First Source of Glory”, the “Voice” of God, and “other-worldly”:

To your Name, land of light  
 and to the great door of the house of Life  
 have I addressed my prayer and made submission,  
 and to that great ... First Source of Glory....  
 Wondrous is His Voice,  
 and His Converse other-worldly.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 169; cf. CPM p.147*

See also: **Discourse, Speech, Voice.**

1. *Lit.* “my members grow fat in His psalms.”

**Counsel, Counsel of Thy Truth** Counsel means both guidance and one who guides; it also means wisdom or prudence. Mystically, the term is used in translations of the psalms found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, where it appears to refer to the creative Power, Word, Wisdom or Holy Spirit:

What am I, that Thou shouldst teach me  
 the Counsel of Thy Truth;  
 And give me understanding  
 of Thy marvellous works.

*Thanksgiving Hymns XIX:1–5 (21), CDSS p.287*

And:

By Thy Holy Spirit I have faithfully hearkened  
 to Thy marvellous Counsel.

In the mystery of Thy Wisdom,  
 Thou hast opened knowledge to me.  
*Thanksgiving Hymns XX:10–15 (23), CDSS p.291*

And:

Thy mercy is towards the sons of Thy goodwill.  
 For Thou hast made known to them  
 the Counsel of Thy Truth;  
 And hast taught them Thy marvellous mysteries.  
*Thanksgiving Hymns XIX:9–10 (21), CDSS p.288*

In all of these, it is clear that the “Counsel of Thy Truth” gives knowledge or experience of the inner mysteries, something which no words – however full of wisdom they may be – can ever accomplish. It is an epithet of God’s creative Power.

**Covenant, Covenant of Peace** A binding agreement or contract; a term stemming from Judaism, traditionally taken to refer to *Yahweh*’s particular relationship with Abraham and the children of Israel, as portrayed in the oldest biblical books – the *Pentateuch*. Understood mystically, the Covenant is God’s special relationship with man, who alone of all forms in the creation is given the blessing of being able to escape from exile in this world, and return to God. In a passage from the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*, written in the late second century BCE, the author makes this point clearly, adding that God has “established an eternal Covenant” with man, such that “their eyes saw His glorious majesty, and their ears heard the glory of His Voice.” The meaning is explicitly mystical:

He established an eternal Covenant with them,  
 and revealed His judgments to them.  
 Their eyes saw His glorious majesty,  
 and their ears heard the glory of His Voice.  
*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 17:12–13, JB*

Philo Judaeus, the first-century Alexandrian Jew and prolific biblical commentator, identifies the Covenant as the *Logos* (Word). Interpreting the biblical story, he speaks of “His *Logos*, which He calls His Covenant”.<sup>1</sup> He also says more generally that “the Covenant of God is an allegory of His gifts of grace.”<sup>2</sup>

Several centuries earlier, in the eighth century BCE, the prophet Isaiah, writing in an older style of literature, also gives a specifically mystic

meaning to the Covenant, though his writings are commonly interpreted differently by Judaism and Christianity. Firstly, Isaiah says that the people of the world are consumed with misery because they have “broken the everlasting Covenant” – they have lost contact with God, and live lives outside His divine Law or will:

The earth is mourning, withering,  
 the world is pining, withering,  
 the heavens are pining away with the earth.  
 The earth is defiled  
 under its inhabitants’ feet,  
 for they have transgressed the Law,  
 violated the precept,  
 broken the everlasting Covenant.  
 So a curse consumes the earth,  
 and its inhabitants suffer the penalty;  
 That is why the inhabitants of the earth are burnt up,  
 and few (true) men are left.

*Isaiah 24:4–6, JB*

According to Isaiah’s story, a prophet is therefore appointed to bring light to the spiritually blind, and to free the soul living in the dark dungeon of this world. Here, the prophet himself is the “Covenant”, as a personification of the Divine:

I, *Yahweh*, have called you  
 to serve the cause of right (righteousness, spirituality);  
 I have taken you by the hand and formed you;  
 I have appointed you as Covenant of the people  
 and light of the nations,  
 to open the eyes of the blind,  
 to free captives from prison,  
 and those who live in darkness from the dungeon.

*Isaiah 42:6–7, JB*

Later, *Yahweh* confirms the enduring nature of His love and His “Covenant of Peace”:

For the mountains may depart,  
 the hills be shaken,  
 but my love for you will never leave you,  
 and my Covenant of Peace with you will never be shaken;  
 Says *Yahweh* who takes pity (has compassion) on you.

*Isaiah 54:10, JB*

Mystics say that man's special relationship with God is not hypothetical but is mediated through God's own Power, His Word. Hence, the Covenant was also used to refer to the Word itself, and may have meant this right from its earliest uses in *Genesis* and the *Pentateuch*. This is borne out by the *Zohar*'s interpretation of God's Covenant with Abraham (which later became His Covenant with Abraham's descendants, the Israelites). It says that at the time of the Covenant, Abraham became attached to the Word of God and ascended to a higher level of spirituality. The Covenant thus represents the heritage of spiritual realms, not the legacy of a physical land or worldly dominion.

A mystic usage of the term is also encountered in the psalms found among the Dead Sea Scrolls at Khirbet Qumran, and commonly attributed to the Teacher of Righteousness, the spiritual teacher around whose teachings the Qumran sect was formed. Among these sectarians, the Covenant acquired an outward form and meaning. They called their group the "Covenant of God", for instance, and new members pledged to abide by the rules of the Covenant. Their "New Covenant" was understood as a renewal of the biblical Covenant, and the movement was motivated by a desire to return to the roots of the Jewish faith.<sup>3</sup> But the meaning in the psalms themselves seems more mystical. In one, the Covenant is linked with the "Counsel of Truth" and the metaphor of Living Waters – both terms for the Word:

Thou hast confirmed the Counsel of Truth in my heart  
and the Waters of the Covenant for those who seek it.

*Thanksgiving Hymns XIII:9 (13), CDSS p.267*

In another, it is associated with the "Holy Spirit":

I thank Thee, O Lord,  
for Thou hast upheld me by Thy strength.  
Thou hast shed Thy Holy Spirit upon me  
that I may not stumble.

Thou hast strengthened me  
before the battles of wickedness;  
And during all their disasters  
Thou hast not permitted that fear  
should cause me to desert Thy Covenant.

*Thanksgiving Hymns XV:5–10 (15), CDSS p.275*

The Covenant is also linked with meditation on "knowledge", meaning mystic knowledge or experience. It is that to which those who are "perfect

of way” – those who follow the path to perfection – are advised to “hold fast to the Covenant”. This cannot be any covenant or code of conduct in this world, however ethically perfect it may be:

Hear, O you wise men, and meditate on knowledge;  
 O you fearful, be steadfast!  
 Increase in prudence, O all you simple;  
 O just men, put away iniquity;  
 Hold fast to the Covenant,  
     O all you perfect of way;  
 O all you afflicted with misery,  
     be patient and despise no righteous judgment! ...  
 But the foolish of heart  
     shall not comprehend these things.

*Thanksgiving Hymns IX:34–40 (6), CDSS p.256*

In another of these hymns or psalms, the Covenant is that by which God has “illuminated my face”. Again, a mystical interpretation makes good sense, for those who hear the divine Music within themselves are illumined within, a condition which reflects upon their faces and in their eyes:

I thank Thee, O Lord,  
     for Thou hast illumined my face by Thy Covenant...  
 I seek Thee, and sure as the dawn  
     Thou appearest as perfect light to me.

*Thanksgiving Hymns XII:5–10 (12), CDSS p.263*

See also: **promised land** (2.1).

1. Philo Judaeus, *On Dreams* II:36; cf. PCW5 pp.548–49.
2. Philo Judaeus, *The Sacrifices of Cain and Abel* 14, PCW5 pp.136–37.
3. e.g. See *The Community Rule* and *The Damascus Rule*, CDSS.

**Creative Word** The creative Power of God.

See **Word**.

**Cry** Mystically, the Creative Word or Voice of God which calls souls back to their eternal home. A cry is something which attracts attention. A person may be busy and preoccupied with their activities, but when they hear a loud cry, they look up, and may even run towards the source of the sound.

Likewise, the souls in this world are deeply preoccupied with the affairs of physical living. But the attraction of the mystic Cry or divine Music captures the wandering attention, and leads the soul away from its involvement with matter.

That this Cry is identified with God's creative Power is made clear in the gnostic tractate, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*. There the writer says that when the one Power began her creative 'journey':

She passed through all the *aeons* (inner realms and powers), ...  
and she established thrones of glory,  
and myriads of angels without number who surrounded them –  
powers and incorruptible glories, who sing and give glory,  
all giving praise with a single Voice, with one accord,  
with one never silent Cry.

*Gospel of the Egyptians 59; cf. GS p.108, NHS4 pp.83–85*

In other words, everything springs from the one creative Power of God: rulers, regions, powers, forces, souls – everything. All are held within the "accord" or will of God, vibrating and pulsating with His "single Voice", His "one never silent Cry".

The term is also found among the Mandaean writings, as in a poem addressed to the Saviour as the "Man":

O Man, whom acclamation chose out,  
who was selected out of the world  
that will cause your eyes to shine, Good One!  
For they have clothed you in a robe which is beautiful.  
Because of your Cry and the Sound of your teaching,  
the Great Life (God) has accepted  
your prayer and your praise.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 128; cf. CPM p.120*

It is in the Manichaean literature, however, where the expression is the most commonly encountered. In a passage attributed to the third-century mystic, Mānī, he describes himself as a "singer", a minstrel who has been led out of "Babel", the realm of confusion and illusion, "to cry out" the great "Cry in the world" – to call souls to himself through the sweetness of the divine Music and the drawing power of the Word:

A thankful disciple am I,  
risen from Babel's land.  
Risen am I from the land of Babel (the negative power),  
and standing (now) at the door of Truth.

I am a singer, a disciple  
 who was led out of the land of Babel.  
 I was led out of the land of Babel  
 in order to cry out a Cry in the world.

*Manichaean Hymns, HR2 p.51ff., RMP cv; cf. GSR p.148:2.5, ML pp.8–9,  
 MM p.24, SCMP p.114*

In Mānī's case, his community of disciples and those of his successors stretched from China to Rome. Hence, a Manichaean psalmist wrote:

The voice of his Cry went to the world:  
 his sheepfold filled the corners of the world.

*Psalms of Heracleidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.194*

The term is common in the Manichaean psalms. In one, the soul begs for the healing of the great Physician, the divine "Exorcist" who rids the soul of possession by the devil:

I heard the Cry of a Physician,  
 the Cry of an Exorcist coming to me;  
 I heard the Cry of a Physician  
 healing his poor ones;  
 He stands (lives), he heals his beloved ones,  
 perfecting all his believers.

O Physician, heal me, [loose my bonds!  
 Heal me, O] Charm looser,  
 for your healing is not of this earth!  
 Your cures are not of this world:  
 your healing is of the land of the Living Ones.

*Psalms of Thomas XIV, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB pp.220–21*

The true nature of the Physician's healing is also made clear: "your healing is not of this earth" but "is of the land of the Living Ones". The demons, curses and "bonds" from which this "Exorcist" and "Charm looser" releases the soul are of an altogether other nature.

In another psalm, the Cry is called the "Living Cry" or Cry of Life which takes the soul to the highest paradise:

I heard the power of your Living Cry,  
 I followed you.  
 I cast from me the nets of Error, ...  
 I let the dead bury the dead....



Henceforth take me with you  
to the paradise of the holy gods.

*Manichaeon Psalm Book CCLXXI; cf. MPB p.90*

Letting the “dead bury the dead” is an allusion to the gospel story in which a young man says that he will follow Jesus, but must first attend his father’s funeral. Jesus replies, “Let the dead bury their dead,”<sup>1</sup> meaning: let the spiritually dead people of the world go on as they do, while you make good your escape from it.

In another psalm, the soul speaks of the sensual chains that bind the attention to this world in life after life, in the “chains that have long endured”. It is “your sweet Cry” and “your Voice” which gives release:

Come to me, my Saviour, the haven of my trust.  
Bestir yourself, O soul that watches  
in the chains that have long endured,  
and remember the ascent into the air (spirit) of joy;  
For a deadly lure is the sweetness of this flesh...

The joy, my Lord, of your sweet Cry  
has made me forget life (in this world);  
The sweetness of your Voice  
has made me remember my (eternal) city.

*Manichaeon Psalm Book CCXLV; cf. MPB pp.52–53*

Another psalm speaks of the time of death, when the soul leaves the body and hears the “sweet voice” and the “Cry” of the Saviour:

Behold, I am coming forth from the body of death....  
Now I call to you:  
“Saviour, come to me in the hour of need....”  
In a sweet voice, he answered me saying,  
“O blessed and righteous man, come forth, be not afraid.  
I am your guide in every place.”

When I heard the Cry of my Saviour,  
a power clothed all my limbs (parts);  
Their bitter walls I destroyed,  
their doors I broke down;  
I ran to my (merciful) Judge.

The garland of glory he set upon my head,  
the prize of victory he set in my hand;

He clothed me in the robe of light,  
 he exalted me over all my enemies.  
 I rejoice as I ascend to my Father  
 with whom I have conquered  
 in the land of the darkness;  
 O my great King, ferry me to the city of the gods.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCXLIII; cf. MPB p.50*

See also: **Call**, **Nidā'**.

1. *Matthew 8:22, KJV.*

**cypress** (He. *ra'anān*) See **Tree of Life**.

**dahān** (P) *Lit.* mouth; the divine Beloved's mouth; a Sufi image signifying the source of God's Command (*Amr*) or Word (*Kalimah*).

See also: **lab**, **Mouth of God**.

**dahān-i kūchak**, **dahān-i shīrīn**, **dahān-i tang** (P) *Lit.* the sugary or sweet (*shīrīn*), the small or pursed (*kūchak*, *tang*) mouth (*dahān*). *Dahān* is a symbol for 'God speaking'; the pursed or small mouth implies 'God speaking alone' or God speaking privately to the wayfarer. *Shīrīn* implies the ineffable sweetness of the Divine.

God's Speech (*Kalām Allāh*) is the Sound perceived by the mystic with his inner faculty of hearing. This entrancing Sound may seem to the mystic to fill the whole world with its resounding beauty, even though the person next to him has not an inkling of its presence. The poetic image of God speaking through pursed lips, speaking privately to the mystic seeker, conveys the intimacy of this experience. Thus, Ḥāfiẓ writes of the divine Beloved:

So sweet and tight,  
 it seems as if her pursed mouth (*dahān-i tang*)  
 were Solomon's seal;  
 Her lip reigns like a ruby  
 in a signet ring  
 over the world.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.119, DHM (259:4) p.257, DIH p.213; cf. in SSEI p.59*

King Solomon's ring is a charming legend arising from a misreading of the Bible. According to *1 Kings*, Solomon spoke "of trees, ... of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes".<sup>1</sup> Legend, however, has it that he spoke *to* other creatures, having complete command over them. He even "branded with his seal all the demons, whom he had summoned for his works of divination, and they became his slaves".<sup>2</sup> Solomon's ring symbolizes the knowledge and power which he is said to have possessed over all beings. In ancient times, the unique impression of a personal signet ring was used as a seal to sign or authorize documents.

See also: **Mouth of God.**

1. *1 Kings* 4:33, *KJV*.
2. *Dictionnaire des Symboles*, DDS p.79.

**Dam** (P) *Lit.* Breath; metaphorically, the Breath of God, the divine creative power; like the Jews, Christians and other Middle Easterners before them, Sufis spoke of God 'breathing' His power and His life into the world. Shabistarī uses the term to describe the process of creation through the divine Pen (*Qalam*), by which God 'writes' all things:

He breathed a little of His power into the Pen,  
and thousands of images appeared on the tablet of Nonexistence.  
From that Breath (*Dam*) appeared the two worlds,  
and from that Breath (*Dam*) appeared human life.

*Shabistarī, Gulshan-i Rāz 4–5, GR p.67*

According to the *Qur'ān*, at the dawn of time God offered the *amānah* (the trust) to all creatures. But animals and all forms other than human "shrank from it" and "refused to bear it".<sup>1</sup> Rūmī says that the trust they would not and could not bear to receive is the Breath (*Dam*) of divine grace which can lift the soul from animal life into spiritual life:

Truly, from fear of this infinite Breath (*Dam*)  
(they were filled with dismay);  
Recite (the words of the *Qur'ān*):  
"But they refused to bear it  
(the trust offered from heaven)."  
Else, how should "They shrank from it"  
have been (in the *Qur'ān*) unless, from fear of it,  
the heart of the mountain had become blood?

*Rūmī, Maśnavī I:1958–59, MJR2 p.106*

From the mystics' point of view, the majority of people live in ways suited to animals rather than human beings, because they do not address their divine potential. For the mystic seeker, the pull towards animal life wars against receptivity to the Divine because the divine Breath cannot reach the heart that is drawn to sensual delights and attachments. Hence, Rūmī continues:

Yesternight this (Breath)  
 presented itself to me in a hidden way,  
 but some morsels (*luqmah*-*'i chandī*) came in and barred the way.  
 For a morsel's (*luqmah*) sake,  
 a Luqmān has become (held in custody as) a pledge:  
 'Tis the time for Luqmān: begone, O morsel (*luqmah*)!

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I: 1960–61; cf. MJR2 p.106*

Rūmī uses a wordplay to depict the seeker's predicament. For the sake of something so small and meaningless as a morsel (*luqmah*) of food, he gives up the opportunity to become as great as the legendary sage, Luqmān: he lets the senses steal his attention away from the divine Breath.

See also: **Breath of God, Nafas al-Raḥmān, naḥḥah.**

1. *Qur'ān* 33:72.

**Dam-i 'Īsá** (P) *Lit.* Breath (*Dam*) of Jesus (*'Īsá*); a Sufi expression, drawn from the Christian gospel stories, for the power that can bring the dead to life; the divine grace that arouses the spiritually dead and leads them to real life; also called *Nafas 'Īsá*; essentially, the spiritual infusion of the Creative Word. To receive this divine influx, Rūmī says that the seeker must first become “dead” to the world through surrendering of the ego:

The meaning of dying is ... self-abnegation;  
 Make yourself dead in self-abnegation and (spiritual) poverty,  
 so that the Breath of Jesus (*Dam-i 'Īsá*) may return you to life,  
 and make as you fair and blessed as itself.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I: 1909–10; cf. MJR2 p.104*

See also: **Nafas 'Īsá.**

**Davar, Davar Yahweh** (He) *Lit.* Word (*Davar*) of God (*Yahweh*); *davar* also means matter, thing, from a Hebrew verb meaning to speak, to declare, to converse, to command, to sing; hence also, God's matter, God's thing; related

to the term *dibbur* (speech, utterance) as in *Dibbur kadmon* (the primal Speech), signifying the divine creative power. Several other Hebrew terms for the divine Word, such as *Ma'amar* (Utterance), *Millah* (Word) and *Kol* (Voice), are used in related ways. *Genesis*, for example, begins by saying that creation took place through the agency of God's Utterance:

And God said, "Let there be light!"

*Genesis 1:3, KJV*

Jewish writers and mystics throughout the ages have understood this to mean that the creation came about through the expression of God's primal Word, the divine creative power or Will. One of the psalms says:

By the Word (*Davar*) of the Lord were the heavens made,  
and all the host of them by the Breath of His Mouth.

*Psalms 33:6, JCL*

The medieval *Zohar* interprets this in a specifically mystical manner:

Come and see. With Speech and with Breath together was the world made, as it is written "By the Word (*Davar*) of the Lord were the heavens made, and all their host by the Breath of His Mouth." "By the Word of the Lord" indicates speech, and "by the Breath of His Mouth" indicates breath. One did not proceed without the other, and they were comprised together, and from them there emerged hosts upon hosts, camps upon camps, all at the same time.

*Zohar 1:156a, WZ2 p.574*

*Davar* also refers to instructions and teachings conveyed by God to His prophets. Many biblical passages speak of the "Word of the Lord" which comes to the prophets or alights upon them. In most places, the text is ambiguous as to whether a literal or mystical meaning is intended. Often, the context implies both:

For the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the Word (*Davar*) of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.

*1 Samuel 3:21-4:1, KB*

And:

The Word (*Davar*) of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest.... And the Hand of the Lord was there upon him.

*Ezekiel 1:3, KJV*

Occasionally, *Davar* is described as being seen, implying that the prophet received the Word of God in a vision – as spiritual sound and light:

The Word (*Davar*) that Isaiah son of Amoz saw,  
concerning Judah and Jerusalem: ...  
For from Zion shall go forth *Torah* (Law),  
and the Word (*Davar*) of the Lord from Jerusalem.

*Isaiah 2:1, 3, JCL*

“Judah”, “Jerusalem” and “Zion” are the ‘higher Jerusalem’, the mystical Zion, the eternal ‘mountain’ of God. In a number of instances, the meaning is ambiguous, but seems to make best sense if the meaning is that of the mystic Word. In the writings of the prophet Jeremiah, for example, it is suggested that the true Word which comes to the prophets is higher than the visions of ordinary prophets. It purifies “like a fire”. It separates “wheat” from “chaff” and “breaks the rock in pieces” – it distinguishes Reality from illusion:

“The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream;  
And he who has my Word (*Davar*),  
let him speak my Word (*Davar*) faithfully.  
What is the chaff to the wheat?” says the Lord.  
“Is not my Word (*Davar*) like a fire?” says the Lord;  
“And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”

*Jeremiah 23:28–29, JCL*

It is the psalms, however, which express the most clearly mystical understanding of *Davar*. One of the psalms recounts the various kinds of suffering to which human beings are prone, indicating in each instance how God can bring them solace. Here, it is “His Word (*Davar*)” which heals the suffering heart:

Some, driven frantic by their sins,  
made miserable by their own guilt,  
and finding all food repugnant,  
were nearly at death’s door.  
Then they called to *Yahweh* in their trouble,  
and He rescued them from their sufferings;  
Sending His Word (*Davar*) and curing them,  
he snatched them from the Pit.

*Psalms 107:17–20, JB*

It is also “His Word (*Davar*)” by which the world is sustained:

He gives an order:  
His Word (*Davar*) flashes to earth  
to spread snow like a blanket,  
to strew hoarfrost like ashes,  
to drop ice like breadcrumbs;  
And when the cold is unbearable,  
He sends His Word (*Davar*) to bring the thaw,  
and warm wind to melt the snow.

*Psalm 147:15–18, JB*

Understood metaphorically, this psalm also symbolizes the paradox of God's love and the existence of suffering. God creates suffering (unbearable cold), so that souls will appreciate His love and long to return to Him. His Creative Word is "ice", as well as "warm wind" and "thaw".

*Davar*, then, is associated with God's creative and sustaining Power, also acting as a personal guide, conveying God's will to the prophets and devout souls. Such souls recognize that the Word gives solace and redemption, and they therefore tread the spiritual path with love and dedication. In one of the psalms, the writer describes the requirements of this path as the "rulings", "statutes" and "commandments" of God. He knows that he can find spiritual "life by Your Word", so long as he turns his mind away from the world, from "getting money" and "lingering on inanities".<sup>1</sup> The Word is his "refuge and shield". He therefore rises "before dawn" to establish inner contact with this mystic Word, "lasting to eternity". He remains "awake throughout the night to meditate" on the "promise" of the "Word", *Davar* being the term used throughout:

How can a youth remain pure?  
By behaving as Your Word (*Davar*) prescribes.  
I have sought You with all my heart,  
do not let me stray from Your commandments....

I find my delight in Your statutes,  
I do not forget Your Word.  
Be good to Your servant and I shall live,  
I shall observe Your Word.  
Open my eyes: I shall concentrate  
on the marvels of Your Law (*Torah*).  
Exile though I am on earth,  
do not hide Your commandments from me....  
Do not deprive me of that faithful Word,  
since my hope has always lain in Your rulings....

Keeping my hope in Your Word,  
 I have worn myself out waiting for You to save me,  
 and have strained my eyes  
 waiting for Your Promise (*imra*, *lit.* Utterance):  
 When, I want to know, will You console me? ...

Lasting to eternity, Your Word, *Yahweh*,  
 unchanging in the heavens:  
 Your faithfulness lasts age after age;  
 You founded the earth to endure.  
 Creation is maintained by Your rulings,  
 since all things are Your servants....

Now Your Word is a lamp to my feet,  
 a light on my path.  
 I have sworn to observe, I shall maintain,  
 Your righteous rulings.  
*Yahweh*, though my suffering is acute,  
 revive me as Your Word has guaranteed....  
 You, my refuge and shield,  
 I put my hope in Your Word....

Your decrees are so wonderful,  
 my soul cannot but respect them.  
 As Your Word unfolds, it gives light,  
 and the simple understand....

I am up before dawn to call for help,  
 I put my hope in Your Word.  
 I lie awake throughout the night,  
 to meditate on Your promise.  
 In Your love, *Yahweh*, listen to my voice,  
 let Your rulings give me life....  
*Yahweh*, may my cry approach Your presence;  
 Let Your Word endow me with perception!

*Psalm 119:9–10, 16–19, 43, 81–82, 89–91,  
 105–7, 114, 129–30, 147–49, 169, JB*

See also: **Dibbur kadmon, Kalimah, Law, Logos, ma'amarot, manna, Memra, Word.**

1. *Psalm 119:36–37.*



**dev(a) Vāṇī** (S/H), **dev Bānī** (H), **dev Bāṇī** (Pu) *Lit.* language (*vāṇī*, *bānī*) of the gods (*dev*); the divine Voice, the celestial Voice, the celestial Music; in Sanskrit, *devavāṇī* simply means a divine voice, but the term is used in later mystic literature for the creative Sound or Voice of God.

See also: **Bānī**.

**dews, Dew, Dew of heaven, Dew of lights, dews of the Column of Glory, Dew of the Lord, Dew of the wind** Dew is formed when droplets of water condense out of the atmosphere onto a cooler surface, especially at night; an important source of water for living organisms, particularly in arid climates. The term is commonly used as a poetic metaphor for the Word or for the spiritual nourishment the soul derives from mystic contact with the Word or, more generally, for divine grace and blessings. In Eastern countries, during certain months of the year, dew can condense out of the atmosphere so copiously that hair and clothing become saturated. Thus, in the allegorical *Song of Songs*, when the Beloved asks for admittance into the bedchamber of his lover (the soul), he says:

For my head is filled with dew.

*Song of Songs 5:2, JCL*

It means that the mystic Beloved is full of divine grace and love. The term is used more specifically by the prophet Isaiah:

Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust;

For your dew is as the Dew of lights (*orot*).

*Isaiah 26:19*

Here, the dead – those “who dwell in dust” – are the people of this world. Spiritually, they will awaken and arise when they come into contact with the “Dew of lights” – the Creative Word. The *Zohar* comments on this passage:

And at the time when the Holy One will raise the dead to life, He will cause Dew to descend upon them from His head. By means of that Dew all will rise from the dust, as it says, “For thy dew is as the Dew of lights,” these being the supernal lights through which the Almighty will in future pour forth life upon the world. For the Tree of Life exudes life unceasingly into the universe.

*Zohar 1:130b–131a, ZSS2 p.21, JCL*

Commenting on a passage in *Genesis*, the *Zohar* also says:

For the “Dew of heaven”<sup>1</sup> promised to Jacob is the supernal Dew that flows from the Ancient of Days (*Arikh Anpin*, the Ancient Holy One, the Godhead), and is therefore called “Dew of heaven”, namely, of the upper heaven, Dew that flows through the grades (levels) of heaven, to fall on the “field of consecrated apples”.<sup>2</sup> Also, the earth mentioned in Jacob’s blessing alludes to the supernal “earth of the living”.<sup>3</sup> Jacob thus inherited the fruit of the supernal earth and the supernal heaven.

*Zohar 1:143b; cf. ZSS2 p.61, JCL*

In modern times, in the annual cycle of Jewish liturgy, a prayer for dew is recited on the festival of Passover (*Pesah*). The prayer consists of a *piyyut*, a poetic form, written by Eleazar ha-Kallir, a religious poet of Palestine, active sometime between the sixth and ninth centuries. Speaking in metaphors, the poet implores God for His sustenance on both physical and spiritual levels. In addition to dew, the poem employs many other images common to the Near East, such as spiritual food and drink, city, light, mountain, the land, the well-watered garden and the flock. The poem reflects the spiritual, mystical strain that flows through much of the liturgy associated with the agriculturally and historically based religious festivals. Initially, it may have represented the spiritual longing of a mystic, and only later have been used in the synagogue service:

Our God and God of our fathers,  
     be gracious unto the land  
     with the gift of Thy Dew.  
 Bestow upon us Thy blessing,  
     the joy of ample corn and wine.  
 O let the Dew of Thy mercy  
     revive the city of Thy love....

Let Dew descend  
     upon the blessed earth.  
 Sate us with Thy heavenly gifts.  
 O let a light dawn in the darkness, ...

Sweeten the mountain’s growth  
     with the sweet gift of Dew....  
 And let Thy chosen seed  
     taste of Thine abundance,  
     and lift their voices in sweet melodies.

Our granaries fill  
     with the earth’s bounty;

Renew our strength  
as in the days of our youth.  
Uplift us, O God of love,  
restore us, as a watered garden,  
nourished with Dew.

Let Dew bless our sustenance;  
Spare from hunger  
Thy faithful flock  
Thou has led from Egypt.  
Heed their longing  
for the Dew of Thy love.

For Thou art the Lord our God,  
who restores the spirit (*moshiv ha-ruah*)  
and showers the Dew.

*Eleazar ha-Kallir, Prayer for Dew, Jewish Prayer Book; cf. PB pp.177–78*

Dew was an image of which the author of the early Christian *Odes of Solomon* was fond. It appears in several of the odes, where no doubt is left as to its meaning. It is specifically called the “Dew of the Lord”, the simile being linked to that of the divine “milk”, the food of the soul:

The Dew of the Lord came upon me, granting rest,  
and He caused a cloud of peace to hang above my head,  
which protected me at all times,  
and became the source of my salvation.

Though all things were shaken and afraid,  
smoke and judgment rising from them,  
I was at peace in the Word of the Lord.

More than shelter was He to me,  
and more than a foundation.  
I was carried like a child by his mother,  
and He gave me milk, the Dew of the Lord.

And I grew strong through His gift,  
and rested in His perfection.  
And I spread out my hands in the ascent of my soul,  
and turned myself towards the Most High,  
and was redeemed by Him.

*Odes of Solomon 35:1–7*

The “Dew” is the refreshing and vitalizing power of the Word. “I was at peace in the Word of the Lord.” It is also the “springs” of Living Water “which pour forth milk and honey”:

Thou hast given us communion with Thee:  
 It was not that Thou wast in need of us,  
     but that we are forever in need of Thee.  
 Sprinkle Thy dews upon us,  
     and open Thy abundant springs which pour forth milk and honey to us.

*Odes of Solomon 4:9–10*

This divine Dew also takes the soul of the devotee into the eternal paradise:

For the Lord is like the sun,  
     shining upon the face of the land:  
 My eyes were enlightened,  
     and my face received the Dew,  
     and my breath (spirit) took pleasure  
     in the pleasant Fragrance of the Lord.  
 And He brought me to His paradise,  
     wherein is the abundance of the Lord’s pleasure.

*Odes of Solomon 11:13–16*

The soul sees the inner light – is spiritually enlightened and illumined by the “sun” of the Lord. She enjoys the “Fragrance” of the Lord – another metaphor for the Word of God.

In the Nag Hammadi tractate, the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, written as a revelation in which the Saviour appears to the apostle Thomas, the metaphor is used in a similar manner. Jesus says:

Woe to you who beguile your limbs (your body)  
     with (the) fire (of human passions)!  
 Who is it that will rain a refreshing dew on you  
     to extinguish the mass of fire from you,  
     along with your burning?  
 Who is it that will cause the sun to shine upon you  
     to disperse the darkness in you  
     and hide the darkness and polluted water?

*Book of Thomas the Contender 144, NHS21 pp.200–1*

Among the Manichaean texts, there are many similar references. Addressing the Saviour, a psalmist writes:

Wash us now therefore in the dewdrops of your joy....  
 Open to us the passage to the vaults of the heavens,  
 and walk before us to the joy of your kingdom, O Glorious One.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCXL; cf. MPB p.41*

Speaking of the inner, light form of the Saviour and the purifying power of the divine Word, another psalm says:

He will appear to you ... with a face full of joy,  
 he will wash you also and purify you with his pleasant dew.  
 He will set your foot on the path of Truth,  
 and furnish you with your wings of light.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXXIX; cf. MPB p.100*

In another interesting reference, the Word is described as a “Column of Glory”, equivalent to the column or pillars of light and cloud which led the children of Israel out of captivity in Egypt, a common symbol for the physical universe, under the guidance of the Saviour Moses.<sup>4</sup> The Parthian term used for the “Column of Glory” is *Srōshahrāy*, derived from *Sraosha*, a term used by Zarathushtra for the divine Sound. The excerpt reads:

O Saviour, O Son of God, take me to you quickly,  
 wash me in the dew of the Column of Glory.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXXXII; cf. MPB p.103*

In a mythological reference to Noah as one of the ancient mystic Saviours, the helmsman of the ship of light, the writer speaks of the Word as a ship which sails with the “Dew of the wind”, where the term for “wind” also means breath or spirit:

Open your gates, light your lamps.  
 Lo, the ship has put in for you, Noah is aboard, he steers.  
 The ship is the Commandment (Word), Noah is the *Nous* of light.  
 Embark your merchandise, sail with the Dew of the wind.

*Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.157*

Finally, in the Manichaean writings found in Chinese Turkestan, the disciple describes the Master as

the King in the Wisdom  
 of the incomparable sweet Dew (*Amṛita*)!

*Manichaean Hymns, LSMH p.180:47*

Here, the “sweet Dew” is again the Creative Word or “Wisdom” of God.

See also: **Amṛit**.

1. *Genesis* 27:28, 39.
2. cf. *Genesis* 27:27 and *Song of Songs* 2:3. In the *Zohar*, three holy apple trees are a metaphor for the three highest spiritual grades, sometimes referred to as the Garden of Eden. The field of apple trees also sometimes symbolizes the divine Presence (*Shekhinah*) itself (cf. *Zohar* 2:60b, ZSS3 p.188).
3. In the Bible, the “earth of the living” or “land of the living” means this world. According to the *Zohar*, however, it is an allusion to heaven or “the kingdom of heaven” (*Zohar* 1:33b, ZSSI p.126). Here, it is used in the context of the land which God promised Jacob in Jacob’s dream, recounted in *Genesis* 28.
4. *Exodus* 13:21ff.

**Dhār** (H/Pu), **Dhārā** (H/Pu) *Lit.* current, stream; mystically, the Sound Current, the Audible Life Stream, the creative Power; a term commonly used by Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, also as *Shabd kī Dhār* and *Shabd Dhār* (the Current of the Word, the Sound Current). It is on this Current that soul ascends:

Hearing the Sound Current (*Shabd Dhār*),  
the soul ascends to the (inner) skies  
and reaches the dwelling of the true Lord.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 8:4.10, SBP p.77*

But it is heard only by the “grace of God”:

After explaining his teaching repeatedly,  
*Rādhā Swāmī* holds his peace.  
For, without the grace of God,  
the Current (*Dhār*) is not obtained.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:1.16, SBP p.87*

*Dhār*, in the sense of a stream or river, is also used to mean the divine nectar of the Sound, the captivating, life-giving sweetness of the divine Current of Music. Guru Arjun writes:

Within him, the Stream of Nectar (*Amrit Dhārā*) uniformly rains:  
the soul drinks, hears and reflects upon the Name.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 102, MMS*

See also: **Amrit Dhārā**, **Life Stream**, **Shabd kī Dhār**.

**dhātī Kalimah** (A), **zātī Kalimah** (P/U/Pu) *Lit.* inherent (*dhātī*) Word (*Kalimah*); the essential Word, the substantive Word; used by a number of Sufi mystics for the Creative Word of God.

See also: **al-Dhāt** (2.2), **Kalimah**.

**dhunātmak Nām** (H) *Lit.* Name (*Nām*) made up of sound (*dhunātmak*); Name composed of sound; the essential Name; the Name beyond words; usually denoting the mystic or holy Name of God, also called the divine Word or Sound. All mystics and all religions have names for God. He has been called *Allāh*, *Khudā*, *Wāhiguru*, *Rādhā Swāmī*, *Yahweh*, *Rām*, *Hari* and by many other names. All these, however, are outward, spoken names. They are verbal or *varṇātmak* (comprised of letters). They have a history in time: there was once a time when these names did not exist. But the Reality they represent has always existed, and always will.

The true Name of God is eternal, unfathomable, invisible and hidden. It is *dhunātmak*, and cannot be written or spoken. It can be heard or realized only by the inner ear, by direct inner perception. It is His Word or creative Power. Many mystics have described this difference. As Mahārāj Charan Singh wrote:

The physical eyes do not see this *Nām*, nor do physical ears hear it. Neither do our feet carry us there, nor can it be caught by our hands. To attain it and to meet the Lord, we need to die while living. The *varṇātmak* names are our means, while the *dhunātmak* Name is our end and object. For the love of mere words, we need not become involved in disputes and dissensions; instead, we should try to discover the true Name with their (the Saints) help...

The words or names for God simply express the love of His devotees, and these *varṇātmak* names are reflections of their love. The true Name, however, is quite different. No history of this Name can be traced, nor can it be limited by time or space. The true Name created the universe, and now sustains the universe. It is a divine power, and is our only support.

*Mahārāj Charan Singh, Divine Light, DL pp.49–50*

Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh adds that it is with the help of the *dhunātmak Nām* that souls can ascend from the physical universe (*piṇḍa*) to the highest level of the greater mind, and from there to eternity:

With the help of *dhunātmak Nām*, the soul can ascend from *piṇḍ* to *brahmāṇḍ*, and from there to its real home, which is *sat lok* (true

region). And that *dhunātmak Nām* can only be obtained from the Saints and nobody else. Only he who is extremely blessed gets this *Nām*.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Prose 2:260, SB p.138*

To make this ascent, the soul must merge with the Creative Word (*Shabd*):

When the *Shabd* (Word) and the soul merge into one,  
then the *dhunātmak Nām* is realized.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 10:1.11, SBP p.95*

See also: **dhunātmak** (2.2), **Nām**.

**dhunātmak Shabd** (H) *Lit.* Word (*Shabd*) made up of sound (*dhunātmak*); the essential, inexpressible or unwritten Word or Sound; the creative Power of God.

See also: **dhunātmak Nām**, **Shabd**.

**Dhun(i)** (H/Pu) *Lit.* melody, music, tune, note, tone; from the Sanskrit *dhvani*, which also means sound, echo, noise; mystically, the divine or heavenly Melody, the divine Music; the creative Power. Sometimes used in conjunction with the term *Shabd* (Word, Sound) as *Shabd Dhun* (the Melody of the Word). The term is found throughout the writings of Indian mystics, as in:

God Himself is the Word (*Shabd*),  
and Himself the understanding (*surat*, soul),  
which is tuned to its Music (*Dhun*).

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 165, MMS*

Keep your soul absorbed in the Melody (*Dhun*);  
Quench your thirst by drinking the nectar of the *Shabd*.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 20:24:1, SBP p.167*

And:

Hearing the *Shabd Dhun* in the heavens,  
my soul was wonderstruck.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 35:24.1, SBP p.304*



**Dhur kī Bāṇī** (Pu) *Lit.* Sound (*Bāṇī*) of (*kī*) the Highest (*Dhur*); the Sound from the Most High; the Sound emanating from the highest and eternal region; the creative Power or Word of God. Guru Arjun says that a “Sound from the Most High (*Dhur kī Bāṇī*) has come”, removing all his cares.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **Bānī**.

1. Guru Arjun, *Ādi Granth* 628.

**Diadem** A royal crown, a light jewelled circlet; a metaphor generally used in Judaic, early Christian, Manichaean and Mandaean texts for the soul’s innate light. In a few instances, however, it refers specifically to the creative Power, as in a list of such terms in the *Acts of John*.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **‘atarah** (2.1), **Crown** (2.1), **diadem** (5.1), **Keter** (4.1), **Name, pearl**.

1. *Acts of John* 109, *ANT* p.268.

**Dibbur kadmon** (He) *Lit.* primordial or primal (*kadmon*) Speech (*Dibbur*); original Speech; the Word or *Logos*; the divine creative energy; used by the thirteenth-century mystic, Abraham Abulafia; equivalent to the Arabic ‘*Aql al-Fa‘āl*’ (Active Intellect), a term for the creative Power used by the Muslim Sufi mystics and the twelfth-century Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides.

Abulafia describes how meditation activates the individual ‘intellect’ or *dibbur* (speech), which is the attentive faculty of the individual soul. Through meditation, the soul unites with the Active Intellect or *Dibbur kadmon* – the primordial Speech.

Abulafia also implies that after merging in the *Dibbur kadmon*, it may be possible to merge into the Godhead itself, which exists beyond the creative Power. Like other mystics, Abulafia also identifies the *Dibbur kadmon* with the Supreme Being.

*Dibbur kadmon* has the same meaning as the Aramaic *Memra* (Utterance), by which the creation came into being. It also corresponds to the Greek *Nous*, commonly translated as Intellect or Intelligence.

Later, the Kabbalists identified it with Wisdom (*Ḥokhmah*), the second *sefirah* in the chain of the *sefirot* (divine emanations).

See also: **Active Intellect**, **al-‘Aql al-Fa‘āl**, **Nous**.

**Discourse** Sometimes used to translate terms which allude to the audibility of the Creative Word or the Voice of God. In the Mandaean allegory of the Fisher (the Saviour), for example, it is said of the Saviour:

His Voice is not like our voice,  
his Discourse like nothing of this world.

*Mandaean John-Book, JMM p.147; cf. GJB p.73, JM p.147*

Likewise, in another Mandaean text, the creative Power is called the “Tree of Glory”. Listening to its “Discourse” bestows inner light:

A Tree of Glory,  
from whose Fragrance everyone is living.  
Everyone who listens to its Discourse (Speech),  
his eyes fill with light.

*Mandaean Ginza (Treasury); cf. GSBM p.59, MEM p.149*

See also: **Conversation, Speech.**

**divine Sound** See **Sound Current.**

**divine Whisper** A whisper is intended as a means of private communication, audible only to the whisperer and the hearer, often conveying a secret; used by John of the Cross (1542–1591) for the divine Sound heard within, particularly in the sense that this is God’s means of communicating with the soul. In his *Spiritual Canticle*, he says that usually, whenever it says in the Bible that God communicated to someone by means of His voice, it refers not to any outer voice but to this inner Sound, the “divine Whisper” which the soul hears “without the help and aid of the senses”:

This divine Whisper, which enters by the ear of the soul, is not only (the) substance which I have called that of understanding, but likewise it is the manifestation of truths concerning the Divinity and the revelation of His hidden secrets. For ordinarily, when (a description of) some communication of God is found in the divine scriptures, and is said to enter by the ear, it is (actually) found to be a manifestation of these naked truths in the understanding, or a revelation of secrets of God, which are purely spiritual visions or revelations, given to the soul alone, without the help and aid of the senses. And so, when it is said that God communicates by the ear, that expression describes a very sublime and certain fact.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XIV–XV:15, CWJC2 p.254*

He then interprets Paul's observation, which he renders as, "I heard secret words which it is not lawful for a man to utter,"<sup>1</sup> to be a reference to this divine Sound.

John of the Cross also refers to this sound as the sonorous Sound, the spiritual Sound or Voice, the silent Music and the sounding Solitude.

See also: **silent Music, sonorous Sound.**

1. 2 *Corinthians* 12:4.

**Draught of Life** A draught is a measure or portion of a liquid to be drunk, often of a medicine, sometimes of an alcoholic beverage. Mystically, it signifies the spiritual nourishment and healing that comes from contact with the divine music of the Word, also described as the Medicine of Life. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, it is described as

the immortal food of the Tree of Life  
and of the Draught of Life.

*Acts of Thomas III; cf. AAA p.177, MEM p.140*

See also: **Amṛit, food and drink of the soul, True Vine.**

**ek Akshar(a)** (S/H), **ek Akkhar** (Pu) *Lit.* one or single (*ek*) word, syllable or letter (*akshar, akkhar*); according to Indian sacred texts, the one *Bīj Mantra* (Seed *Mantra*), *Om*, which is said to enable a soul to overcome all difficulties; also, the one Word, the creative Power. The repetition or remembrance that can completely and lastingly enable a soul to transcend all difficulties is that of the Sound (*Om*) that takes the soul far beyond the realm of human words and letters. Thus, the *Bhagavad Gītā* says:

He who closes all the doors of the body –  
confining the mind to its centre (*hṛid, lit. heart*),  
drawing all the vital energy of the soul (*ātman*) into the head –  
He establishes himself in yogic concentration (*yoga-dhāraṇā*).  
Repeating the single syllable (*ek Akshara*) *Om*, denoting *Brahman*,  
remembering me, and abandoning the body,  
he leaves (the body), and reaches the highest state.

*Bhagavad Gītā* 8:12–13

Mystics have pointed out in a number of languages that all the words in all the holy books cannot give salvation. What is required is the one Word, the mystic Word which takes the soul to God.

See also: **Akkhar** (2.1, 3.1).

**Enlil** The Breath, the Word or the son of *Anu* in ancient Sumerian and later Mesopotamian cultures, dating back to the third and fourth millennia BCE. *Anu* gave birth to *Enlil*, the breath and the ‘Word’ of *Anu*, as in the Sumerian psalm:

The spirit of the Word is *Enlil*,  
the spirit of the heart is *Anu*.  
*Sumerian Psalms 1:38–41, SBPL p.24*

The “heart” here refers to the centre and source of life, while the “Word” is the expression of life. Hence, archaeologist and author N.K. Sandars comments, “*Enlil* is power in action, where *Anu* is power in being.”<sup>1</sup> This is the difference between the Creative Word and the supreme Lord of later mystical expression. In Sumerian mythology, *Enlil* is both a creative and a destructive power, as indeed is the Word which underlies all activity in the creation – creative or destructive.

See also: **Enki** (2.1).

1. N.K. Sandars, *Epic of Gilgamesh*, EG p.24.

**eternal Fountain** Part of the family of metaphors associated with that of the Living Water as the ever flowing Word of God.

See **Fountain of Life**.

**‘Ez Ḥayyim** (He) *Lit.* Tree (‘Ez) of Life (Ḥayyim); a metaphor fundamental to Judaism, making its first appearance in *Genesis* in the story of Eden, but having antecedents in earlier Mesopotamian mythology. According to *Genesis*:

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden,  
and there He put the man whom He had formed.  
And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow  
every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food –  
The Tree of Life (‘Ez Ḥayyim) also in the midst of the garden,  
and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

*Genesis 2:8–9, KJV*

There is “Eden”, and there is the “garden” that God “planted ... eastward in Eden”. In the garden, there is the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. If the garden represents the creation, then it may be presumed that Eden represents the eternity of God. The Tree of Life – which is in the garden – brings the immortal life and nourishment of the Spirit to the souls in creation. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil brings death – the spiritual death experienced in this world of duality, of good and evil.

To begin with, Adam and Eve are able to eat of the Tree of Life. But they are tempted by the serpent, who is always identified as the devil, the negative force in human life. Once the devil has persuaded them to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they are banished from both Eden and the garden, and come to live in this world. Their ‘fall’ thus symbolizes the descent of the soul into this world.

The Tree of Life represents the Spirit, the divine Word, which is the life force that flows from the divine Source into the creation, sustaining and nourishing all life. The fruit of the Tree of Life represents the soul’s experience of God – mystic union with its source, conferring eternal life.

The Tree of Life is an apt metaphor in the arid environment inhabited by the seminomadic, agricultural peoples of the ancient Middle East. In a land where water is scarce and vegetation is precious, the tree becomes a symbol of life and renewal – of nourishment flowing from the source.

See also: **garden of Eden** (4.1), **Tree of Life**.

**Finger(s) of God** A biblical metaphor for the reach of God’s power into the creation; hence, the all-pervasive power of His Creative Word, Command or Will, as in the *Psalms*:

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy Fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained;  
What is man, that thou art mindful of Him?  
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?

*Psalm 8:3–4, KJV*

The term is a variant of the Hand of God or the Right Hand of God for the divine creative power. Hence, in the early Christian *Odes of Solomon*, “His Hands” and “His Fingers” are equated with “His Word”:

I will open my mouth,  
and His Spirit will speak through me  
of the glory of the Lord and His beauty –

And the work of His Hands,  
 and the craft of His Fingers,  
 and the multitude of His mercies,  
 and the power of His Word.

*Odes of Solomon 16:5–7*

See also: **Hand of God**.

**First-born, First-born Son** The Creative Word or Power as the first and primal Emanation of God; the Only-begotten Son; used especially in gnosticism and early Christianity. In the Nag Hammadi, *Tripartite Tractate*, for example, the writer says:

Just as the Father exists in the real sense, the One before whom there was no one else, and the One apart from whom there is no other unbegotten one, so too the Son exists in the real sense, the one before whom there was no other, and after whom no other son exists.

Therefore, he is a First-born and an only Son; ‘first-born’ because no one exists before him, and ‘only Son’ because no one is after him.

*Tripartite Tractate 57; cf. NHS22 pp.200–3*

The First-born or Only-begotten Son does not mean that any man was considered to be the single and only Son of God. When Jesus or other mystics were referred to by this term, it was in their capacity as personifications of the mystic First-begotten or Only-begotten Son. Such appellations are frequently found in the ancient Christian literature. In the *Acts of Peter*, for example, Peter describes Jesus as the First-begotten. Speaking to a group of new believers, he counsels them to imbibe all the good human virtues:

Then will you have, for your guide everlastingly,  
 the First-begotten of all creation,  
 and will have strength in peace with our Lord.

*Acts of Peter III:II; cf. ANT p.305*

And in the *Acts of Thomas*, Judas Thomas praises Jesus, saying:

Glory be to the Only-begotten of the Father!  
 Glory be to the First-born of many brethren!  
 Glory be to thee, the Defender and Helper  
 of them that come unto thy refuge!

*Acts of Thomas 60, ANT p.393*

While in one of the Manichaean psalms, the psalmist prays:

You are a mighty light: Jesus, enlighten me:  
 First-born of the Father,  
 lamp of all the *aeons* (realms),  
 flower of the Mother of the Lights,  
 snare of the Snarer (Satan)....  
 Glory be to you,  
 O First-born of the Father.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB pp.166–67*

In another, the Master is described as:

The first Emanation....  
 the First-born of his Father.

*Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.137*

In all these, the “First-born” is the primal or “first Emanation” of God – His creative Power.

See also: **Only-begotten Son, Son of God** (►2).

**First Mānā** A Mandaean term meaning Primal Mind or Primal Essence – hence, the Word – as in the Zoroastrian *Vohu Manō*, from which the term probably had its origins. A Mandaean prayer, for instance, reads:

To your Name, land of light,  
 and to the great door of the house of Life,  
 have I addressed my prayer and made submission,  
 and to that great First *Mānā*,  
 and that great First Source of Glory.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 169; cf. CPM p.147*

See also: **Vohu Manō**.

**First Mystery** A Mandaean synonym for the creative Power – the first emanation of Life or God:

Your Name, O Life, is excellent:  
 its glory is great, its light abundant.

Its goodness overflowed, inaugurating the First Mystery,  
 Life which proceeded from Life and Truth,  
 which existed from the beginning.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 45; cf. CPM p.41*

See also: **Life** (2.1).

**First Vine** A Mandaean variant of the True Vine as the Tree of Life, the Word of God.

See **Tree of Life, True Vine**.

**Five Bodies, Five Law-bodies, Five Light-bodies** Terms used in the Manichaean manuscripts from Chinese Turkestan, referring to the five major ‘divisions’ of the one Law or Word – the Five Greatnesses or regions in Mānī’s descriptive system. For instance:

Cease all kinds of evil doings,  
 and return to your own Originator! ...  
 Control your thoughts:  
 rectify and regulate them constantly;  
 Meditate and contemplate upon  
 the real and right Law (the Word), day and night,  
 and persistently single out and clarify the Five wonderful Bodies.

If there are people who suffer in the transmigration of hell,  
 in the fire of the *kalpa* (age) of destruction  
 and the eternal confinement,  
 it is really because they do not recognize the Five Light-bodies,  
 and are therefore severed  
 from the country of peace and happiness.

*Manichaean Hymns; cf. LSMH p.197:245–47*

Meditation upon these “Five wonderful Bodies” or “Five Light-bodies” brings release from the hell of transmigration in the “*kalpa* (age) of destruction”, known to Indian mythology as the *kaliyuga*. Those who are in touch with these Five Bodies return to God, their “Originator”, and the eternal realm, the “country of peace and happiness”.

See also: **Five Greatnesses** (4.1), **Five Trees, Law**.



**Five Trees** An extension of the Tree of Life metaphor for the Creative Word, appearing in gnostic and Manichaean writings, perhaps representing the five branches or aspects of the Word as it passes through five of the major divisions in the hierarchy of creation. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, a collection of sayings and parables attributed to Jesus, he says:

If you become my disciples,  
 and listen to my words (my Word?),  
 these stones will minister to you.  
 For there are Five Trees for you in paradise,  
 which remain undisturbed summer and winter,  
 and whose leaves do not fall.  
 Whoever becomes acquainted with them  
 will not experience death.

*Gospel of Thomas 36:19, NHS20 pp.60–61*

The one who comes into contact with these Five Trees “will not experience death”. It means that the soul will reach the realm of eternal life with God, and will not have to undergo further death by taking birth in this world.

Other gnostic texts are more explicit as to the meaning of the “Five Trees”. The *Second Book of Jeu* speaks of:

... the Five Trees of the treasury of the Light,  
 which are the unmoved (eternal) Trees.  
 They will give to you their mystery,  
 which is the great mystery, and their great Seal,  
 and the great Name of the treasury of the Light,  
 which is ruler (king) over the treasury of the Light.

*Second Book of Jeu 119:50, BC pp.166–67*

In a similar metaphor from the Manichaean texts, the “Vine of the five branches” is explicitly equated with the *Nous* and the *Logos*, both being terms for the divine creative power. The soul takes its being from this great Vine:

You (O soul) are (from) the Vine of the five branches,  
 which is the food of the gods,  
 and the nourishment of the angels.  
 It is the raiment of the righteous,  
 the robe of the holy.  
 It is the Mind (*Nous*) of the perfect,  
 the Reason (Word, *Logos*) of the believers.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.181*

Five Trees also appear in Indian mythology as the *pañchavṛksha* of *Indra*'s paradise (*svarga*). These are:

1. The *Mandāra*, identified as a coral tree (*Erythrina indica*), with crimson blossom, beneath whose shade a deep peace is experienced and all cares are forgotten.
2. The *Pārijātaka*, often identified with the *Mandāra*, which arose from the primeval churning of the ocean at the creation of the universe, and which was taken by *Indra* to his paradise. The *Pārijātaka* was later carried off by *Kṛishṇa*, but was subsequently returned.
3. The *Samtāna*, a magical tree, the chewing of whose leaves ensures the birth of children, and that one's line will continue forever.
4. The *Chandana* or *Harichandana*, *Indra*'s sandalwood tree, whose scent pervades paradise. It is said that *Indra* once permitted one of his devotees to enter paradise, but he was rapidly returned to earth because his overpowering human stench could not be dispelled or disguised even by the *Chandana*.
5. The *Kalpavṛksha*, *Kalpataru* or *Kalpadruma* (wishing tree) or *Kalpavallī* (wishing creeper) which was said to grow on earth during the earlier *yugas*, making it unnecessary for human beings to own property or possessions, since they needed only to sit beneath the *Kalpataru* and make their wishes. However, because of the evil nature of human desires in later *yugas*, the *Kalpataru* was removed to *Indra*'s paradise.

The origins of this mythology are uncertain, but there are certain features which aptly symbolize aspects of heavenly and human existence. The peace of the heavenly realms is conferred by the *Mandāra*; the presence of the *Pārijātaka* in creation is primeval; the eternal nature of the soul is symbolized, perhaps, by the *Samtāna*'s power to grant a kind of immortality through the birth of children; and the instant wish-fulfilling nature of the *Kalpataru* is indicative of the astral and causal heavens where reality is comprised of mind energies, and where thought and desire are instantly translated into reality.

Whether the Five Trees in paradise of early Christian and Manichaean literature originated in Indian mythology or are an independent extension of the metaphor of the Tree of Life is unknown.

See also: **Five Bodies, Five Greatnesses** (4.1), **pañch Shabd**.

**food and drink (of the soul)** Spiritual food and drink are common metaphors in the world's mystic literature, either referring specifically to the creative Power

and the spiritual strength and sustenance that the soul draws from contact with it, or more generally to the divine grace and bliss experienced by the soul in mystic transport. Among the commonest metaphors in Jewish and Christian literature for the creative Power were the Living Water and the Bread of Life. It was also referred to as milk, honey and wine. Isaiah uses all of these in a passage where he addresses the spiritually poor of this world:

O come to the water all you who are thirsty:  
 though you have no money, come!  
 Buy corn (hence, bread) without money, and eat,  
 and, at no cost, wine and milk.  
 Why spend money on what is not bread,  
 your wages on what fails to satisfy?  
 Listen, listen to me,  
 and you will have good things to eat  
 and rich food to enjoy.  
 Pay attention, come to me:  
 listen, and your soul will live.

*Isaiah 55:1–3, JB*

The last line makes it clear that he is speaking of spiritual food and drink, rather than physical sustenance. These words of Isaiah were well known in the ancient world, and are echoed in the biblical Wisdom literature and other places. In both *Proverbs* and the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*, for instance, Wisdom as the creative Power, specifically invites the soul to eat and drink, leaving no doubt that the intended meaning is spiritual:

Come and eat my bread,  
 drink the wine I have prepared!  
 Leave your folly and you will live,  
 walk in the ways of perception (consciousness).

*Proverbs 9:5–6, JB*

And:

Come unto me all ye that desire me,  
 fill yourselves with my fruits;  
 For my memory is sweeter than honey,  
 my inheritance than honeycomb.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 24:19–20; cf. in OPJG p.61*

These books would have been familiar to all Jews and many others of those times, and echoes of these evocative passages are commonly found throughout the mystic literature of the period. In Matthew, Jesus says:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,  
 and I will give you rest.  
 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;  
 For I am meek and lowly in heart:  
 and ye shall find rest unto your souls.  
 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

*Matthew 11:28–30, KJV*

Philo Judaeus (c.20 BCE – 50 CE) also echoes the same refrain, calling the *Logos* the Cupbearer, another common Middle Eastern image, used especially by the much later Sufis:

And when the happy soul that stretches forth its own inner being as a most holy drinking vessel – who is it that pours forth the sacred measures of true joy but the *Logos*, the Cupbearer of God and Master of the feast – he who differs not from the draught he pours – his own self free from all dilution, who is the delight, the sweetness, the forthpouring, the good cheer, the ambrosial drug (to take for our own use the poet's terms) whose medicine gives joy and contentment.

*Philo Judaeus, On Dreams II:37; cf. PCW5 pp.554–55, TGH1 p.245*

Philo also considers the *Logos* or divine Wisdom to be the essential food of the soul:

The soul is not nourished with earthly things that decay, but with such rays of grace as God shall pour like rain out of that lofty and pure region of Life which the prophet (Moses) has called heaven....

Do you not see of what kind is the food of the soul? It is the *Logos* of God, (raining) continuously like dew, embracing all the soul, leaving no portion without part in itself.

But this *Logos* is not apparent everywhere, but (only) in the man who is destitute of passions and vices; and it is subtle and delicate both to conceive and be conceived, surpassingly pure and translucent to behold.

It is, as it were, a coriander seed. For tillers of the soil say that if you cut the seed of the coriander into countless pieces, each of the portions into which you cut it, if sown, grows exactly as the whole seed would have done.

So, too, is the *Logos* of God able to confer benefits both as a whole and by means of every part, yes any part you light upon....

For He nourishes us with His *Logos* – the most universal (of all things).... And the *Logos* of God is above the whole cosmos; it is the most ancient and most universal of created things....

Therefore, let God announce His (good) tidings to the soul: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”<sup>1</sup> – that is, he shall be nourished by the whole of the *Logos* and by (every) part of it. For ‘mouth’ is a symbol of the (whole) *Logos*, and ‘word’ is its part.

*Philo Judaeus, Allegorical Interpretation III:56, 59, 61;  
cf. PCW1 pp.408–9, 414–15, 418–21, TGH1 pp.246–48*

References to spiritual food and drink are encountered once again in the allegorical *Song of Songs*, where the bride (the soul) invites the Beloved (the Master) into the “garden” of her soul:

Awake, north wind,  
    come, wind of the south!  
Breathe over my garden,  
    to spread its sweet smell around.  
Let my Beloved come into his garden,  
    let him taste its rarest fruits.

*Song of Songs 4:16, JB*

To which the Beloved responds with an invitation to eat freely and drink deeply at the spiritual banquet:

I come into my garden,  
    my sister, my promised bride,  
I gather my myrrh and balsam,  
I eat my honey and my honeycomb,  
I drink my wine and my milk.  
Eat, friends, and drink,  
    drink deep, my dearest friends.

*Song of Songs 5:1, JB*

Since it relates directly to the immediate, physical needs of human life, the metaphor of spiritual food and drink was an obvious one, and practically all mystics have used it in one way or another. In the gnostic literature, for instance, in a description of the soul who is treading the mystic path, spiritual food is contrasted with the deceitful food of this world:

The soul – she who has tasted these things (of the spirit) – realized that sweet passions are transitory. She had learned about evil: she went away from them and she entered into a new conduct. Afterwards she despises this life, because it is transitory. And she looks for those

foods that will take her into life, and leaves behind her those deceitful foods.

*Authoritative Teaching 31–32, NHS11 pp.280–81*

The same imagery of the *Logos* as the food and drink of the soul underlies the passages in John's gospel where Jesus – as a personification of the *Logos* – says, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.”<sup>2</sup>

See also: **Bread, Eucharist** (►2).

1. *Deuteronomy* 8:3.
2. *John* 6:54.

**Fountain(s), Fount(ain) of Life, Fountain of Living Water(s), Fountains of Salvation** Part of a family of metaphors associated with that of the Living Water as the ever flowing Word of God. In a largely agrarian society, situated in a generally hot and arid area of the world, the central role of water in the maintenance of physical life is readily understood. Just as a river brings life to the desert, so too does the Living Water of the creative Power bring life to the parched desert of the physical world, where souls are knowingly or unknowingly burning in the heat of their desires and concerns, thirsty for a refreshing touch of the spiritual water.

Biblical writers were familiar with this imagery. Jeremiah depicts God as the Source or Fountain of Living Water (He. *Mekor Mayyim Hayyim*):

Hope of Israel, *Yahweh*!  
 All who abandon You will be put to shame;  
 Those who abandon You will be uprooted from the land,  
 since they have abandoned *Yahweh*, the Fountain of Living Water.

*Jeremiah 17:13; cf. JB*

And:

My people have committed a double crime:  
 they have abandoned me,  
 the Fountain of Living Water,  
 only to dig cisterns for themselves,  
 leaky cisterns that hold no water.

*Jeremiah 2:13, JB*

“My people” refers to all souls in this world, not to Israel alone. They have largely “abandoned” God. They have turned away from the one who lies within, turning their attention away from the life-giving creative Power. They have dug “leaky cisterns”: they have sought Life in the outward affairs of the physical creation where everything passes away or dies. The precious inner water of spirituality has leaked away into the world.

The writer of *Proverbs* also uses imagery associated with “fountains” and “water”:

Drink the water from your own cistern,  
 fresh water from your own well.  
 Do not let your fountains flow to waste elsewhere,  
 nor your streams in the public streets.  
 Let them be for yourself alone,  
 not for strangers at the same time.  
 And may your fountainhead be blessed!

*Proverbs 5:15–18, JB*

In this instance, the soul is advised to drink the “fresh water” that flows from within, the inner wellspring, the “water from your own cistern”. This precious current of life should not be permitted to flow out into the world, “the public streets”. In this manner, the “fountainhead “ of the soul will be “blessed” with inundation from the Living Water.

In a passage replete with similar esoteric metaphors, the prophet Joel writes:

And it shall come to pass in that day,  
 that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine,  
 and the hills shall flow with milk,  
 and all the brooks of Judah shall flow with waters;  
 And a Fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord,  
 and shall water the valley of Shittim.

*Joel 4:18, JPS*

Although this passage is commonly taken as a prophecy of the ‘day of the Lord’, a mystical and allegorical interpretation also makes good sense of it. Interpreted in that way, the “mountains” and “hills” symbolize the inner, spiritual realms. The “valley of Shittim” signifies the physical realm. And the “sweet wine”, the “milk”, the “waters” and the “Fountain” are all references to the sweet and life-bestowing Living Waters, Living Wine and spiritual nourishment brought by the Word of God to the souls of this world.

Isaiah is also using similar imagery when he speaks of the Wells or Fountains of Salvation (He. *Ma‘ayanei ha-Yeshua*):

Behold, God is my salvation:  
 I will trust, and not be afraid;  
 For the Lord God is my strength and my song:  
 He also has become my salvation.  
 Therefore with joy shall you draw water  
 from the Wells of Salvation (*Ma'ayanei ha-Yeshua'*).

*Isaiah 12:2–3, JCL*

Later Jewish mystics used the image of streams of waters flowing from the source as a metaphor for the emanation of the *sefirot* – the divine aspects or qualities – from the Godhead. The medieval *Zohar* explains:

Just as a fountain or a water source fills a mighty stream, and from thence sources of rivers extend and flow on every side, so here: through one narrow channel (the channel of *Hokhmah*) that is not known (hidden), that great river emerges and gushes forth, and from thence sources and streams extend (the lower *sefirot* and their influence), and they are filled with it.

This is (the meaning of) the verse, “Who sends forth springs into the streams”.<sup>1</sup> These are the holy, supernal rivers (the *sefirot*) of pure balsam. And they are all saturated as one with the flowing of the holy, supernal stream, which gushes forth.

*Zohar 3:181a, WZl p.436*

The writer of the *Song of Songs* was also fond of similar watery images, as when the divine Beloved depicts the beauty of the lover, who symbolizes the soul:

Fountains (*ma'ayan*) that make the gardens fertile,  
 well (*be'er*) of Living Water,  
 streams flowing down from Lebanon.

*Song of Songs 4:15, JB*

Here, the first line can also mean “a Fountain of gardens”, as in a commentary on this passage in the *Zohar*:

Rabbi Pinḥas began by quoting: “A Fountain of gardens, a well of Living Waters, and flowing streams from Lebanon”....

“A Fountain of gardens” – how good and precious it is! This fountain benefits plants and fruits. Whoever approaches it derives pleasure from all of these – pleasure from the water, pleasure from the plants, pleasure from the fruits. This fountain is crowned with every-



thing. It is surrounded with so many roses, so many fragrant plants. This fountain is more beautiful than other fountains....

“A well of Living Waters” – if necessary it becomes a fountain, and if necessary it becomes a well. What is the difference? Pouring out water of its own accord is one thing; having its water drawn up for drinking (by spiritual practice) is another.

“And flowing streams from Lebanon.” What does ‘flowing’ mean? These are the five sources, which go out from Lebanon above and they flow; for when they become a fountain, water gushes forth, and the drops flow one after the other – sweet water for which the soul yearns. In this way the Holy One, blessed be He, has performed a miracle for us in this place, through this Fountain. And to this Fountain I apply this verse.

*Zohar 3:202a, WZ1 p.143*

“Lebanon” here is used as a symbol for the higher realms or perhaps for eternity itself. The “five sources”, the five streams that flow out from Lebanon, water the “gardens”, the regions of creation lying below.

In another passage from the *Song of Songs*, the Beloved describes the lover (the soul) as a “sealed fountain”. The Living Water is within her, but sealed from her view by the veil of her lower nature:

She is a garden enclosed,  
my sister, my promised bride:  
A garden enclosed,  
a sealed fountain.

*Song of Songs 4:12, JB*

The biblical psalms also use the imagery of water, streams, rivers and so on. One of the psalmists says of *Yahweh*:

Yes, with you is the Fountain of Life,  
by Your light, we see the Light.

*Psalms 36:9, JB*

The writer of *Proverbs* also speaks of this “life-giving fountain”. It is to be found, he says, through the teachings of a sage, a “wise man” who teaches the path of contact with the Living Water of Wisdom or the Word which takes souls away from the death of living in this world:

The wise man’s teaching is a life-giving fountain,  
for eluding the snares of death.

*Proverbs 18:14, JB*

Likewise:

The mouth of the virtuous man is a life-giving fountain,  
violence lurks in the mouth of the wicked.

*Proverbs 10:11, JB*

The “virtuous man” is again the sage or mystic, for however good a man may be and however consoling or helpful his counsel, his words could hardly be described as a “life-giving fountain”. Yet both the words and the Word of a mystic bring life and energy to a spiritually parched heart.

Several centuries later, in the early Christian literature, these sentiments are expressed in the *Acts of Thomas*, where Judas Thomas applies them to Jesus:

And he shall be to you a fountain  
springing up in this thirsty land;  
And a chamber full of food  
in this place of them that hunger;  
And a rest unto your souls.

*Acts of Thomas 37, ANT p.383*

The food is the spiritual nourishment of the soul, while the “thirsty land” and “this place of them that hunger” is this world where souls are spiritually bereft, seeking to fill their constant inner hunger and thirst with the things of impermanence.

Writers of the apocryphal and gnostic texts were freer than the New Testament gospel compilers in their use of watery metaphors. In one of the anecdotes related in the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, the apostle Judas Thomas baptizes or initiates a king and his brother, prefacing the baptism with a short speech in which he includes the prayer:

Give them drink out of your immortal Fountain,  
which is neither fouled nor dries up.

*Acts of Thomas 25; cf. ANT p.375*

More or less the same expression is used in one of the Manichaean psalms:

My Saviour has not deserted me,  
he has sated me from his Fountain that is full of Life.  
I have known the way of the Holy Ones,  
these Ministers of God....  
I have cast away from my eyes this sleep of death,  
which is full of Error.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXI; cf. MPB pp.75–76*

In the Mandaean literature, among many similar images, the highest essence of God Himself is described as the “Fountainhead”. There, the poet, speaking in the name of the Living Water, writes that three further “*shkinata* (dwellings, realms)” arise within that supreme, divine Source:

From the Fountainhead came I forth,  
 from the Source of Springs of Life went I hence.  
 Three *shkinata* did I found,  
 and set over them Guardians as rulers.  
 The Guardians I appointed to rule over them  
 are sublime, blessed and truthful to the uttermost.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 82, CPM p.90*

See also: **Chashmah-’i Khizr, Living Water.**

1. *Psalm* 104:10.

**Fragrance (of Life)** Fragrance, perfume and, by association, fragrant herbs, spices, trees and flowers, with their healing and soothing properties and their ability to attract and intoxicate the senses, have been commonly used as mystic images. Hence, Fragrance, Perfume, Scent and other similar terms have been used by mystics to describe the bliss and intoxication of listening to the divine music of the Word and also as terms for the Word itself.

The metaphor is associated with terms used for the Creative Word such as Breath, Wind and Spirit. In Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and a number of other ancient Middle Eastern languages, terms for breath, wind, fragrance and spirit were either the same or were derived from the same root.

The imagery appears in the biblical Wisdom literature as, for instance, in the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*, in a passage where it is Wisdom who is ‘speaking’:

I have exhaled a perfume like cinnamon and acacia,  
 I have breathed out a scent like choice myrrh,  
     like galbanum, onycha and stacte,  
     like the smoke of incense in the tabernacle.  
 I have spread my branches like a terebinth,  
     and my branches are glorious and graceful.  
 I am like a vine putting out graceful shoots,  
     my blossoms bear the fruit of glory and wealth.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 24:15–17, JB*

Such expressions are also found extensively in the *Song of Songs*, where both the Lover and the Beloved speak of divine love. The imagery has a

symbolic, mystical meaning. The Lover (the soul) describes the divine Beloved:

Delicate is the fragrance of your perfume.

*Song of Songs 1:3, JB*

His cheeks are beds of spices,  
banks sweetly scented.

His lips are lilies,  
distilling pure myrrh.

*Song of Songs 5:13, JB*

May ... your breath (be as) sweet scented as apples,  
your speaking, superlative wine.

*Song of Songs 7:9–10, JB*

And the Beloved describes the beauty of the pure soul, full of the spiritual fragrance of love:

How fragrant your perfumes,  
more fragrant than all other spices!

*Song of Songs 4:10, JB*

And:

The scent of your garments  
is like the scent of Lebanon.

*Song of Songs 4:11, JB*

The imagery was also used by the gnostics. In the Nag Hammadi tractate, the *Gospel of Truth*, a term translated by some scholars as ‘Fragrance’ and ‘Aroma’ and by others as ‘Essence’ seems once again to be a direct reference to the divine music of the Word. This Fragrance or divine Spirit, says the writer, is detected or scented by the soul or spirit, leading the soul to its Source, just as a worldly scent can lead the one who smells it to its origin:

For the Father is sweet and His will is good. He knows what is (truly) yours and what will give you rest. You can see the fruit of this in yourselves, for the children of the Father are of His Fragrance (Essence), which emanates from the grace of His presence. Therefore (because it is of Himself), the Father loves His Fragrance and makes it manifest everywhere. And since it is mingled with matter, He adds His

Fragrance to the light (of the soul), and in quietude (meditation), He makes it more beautiful than any other sight or any other sound.

But it is not the (outer) ears which scent this Fragrance. It is the soul (*lit.* breath) which has the (necessary) faculty, being attracted by the Fragrance and becoming merged in this Fragrance of the Father, to the extent that she takes shelter in it, and is taken to its place of origin.

*Gospel of Truth 33–34; cf. GS pp.260–61, GT pp.48–50, NHS22 pp.104–5*

Oddly, the writer says that the “ears” are associated with the detection of this Fragrance or Spirit. He also states that it is not the outer ears which hear it, but the soul “in quietude”. The seeming paradox over the detection of a scent through the faculty of hearing suggests an allusion to the audibility of the divine Word, a common feature of gnostic teachings.

In the Manichaean literature, the term “Fragrance” is frequently encountered. In one of their psalms, for example, it is said that the soul, a particle of the divine Light, will return to its real home – and the Light is equated with Fragrance:

The light shall go to the Light,  
the fragrance shall go to the Fragrance.  
The essence of the living man (the soul) shall go  
to the living land from which it came.  
The light shall return to its place,  
the darkness shall fall and not rise again.

*Psalms of Thomas VIII, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.215*

In another extract, according to a literary style of the times, the Word itself is ‘speaking’, describing the Saviour as a “part”, a “sweet Fragrance” that “went forth” to lighten the inner darkness of those souls in this world who seek inner light:

A part therefore went forth from my Robe:  
it went, it lightened their darkness;  
My sweet Fragrance went, it sweetened their stink;  
My brethren, the Sons of light (the Saviours), went forth:  
they brought peace to their land.

*Psalms of Thomas I, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.205*

Similarly, in a psalm where the soul is calling out for help to free herself from the entanglements of the body and this world, described as a “charnel house”, she concludes:

[Send me] the Fragrance of my Kinsmen (the Saviours),  
[breath into] this charnel house, the sweet Breath of the Spirit.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.152*

The Mandaean writers, too, were fond of the term Fragrance as an epithet of the primal Essence or Emanation of the Divine, as in the poem:

The Fragrance of Life rises up to the house of Life,  
and we too will rise up to the house of Life:  
We shall be with the victorious.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 31; cf. CPM p.28*

And:

All fruits wither: all sweet odours pass away,  
but not the Fragrance of the *gnosis* of Life,  
which comes not to an end nor yet passes away.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 34; cf. CPM p.34*

Here, Fragrance is synonymous with the Creative Word. Speaking of the descent of the Word from God, another Mandaean poem describes it as the “Fragrance”, “Truth” or “Sign” which came from the eternal “home”. It comes to dwell in the “house” – the physical form or body of a Saviour, the “Good One” – and awakens the spiritually dead and sleeping souls of this world. It is a Call which “cries and makes the dead live”, taking them back to the “place of light”, eternity:

Fragrance came from its own place,  
Truth came from its home.  
Fragrance came from its own place,  
it came and settled in the house.  
It cries and makes the dead live,  
it arouses those who are dying,  
and lying prone.  
It awakens souls who are fit for and worthy  
of the place of light.  
This, this is what the Good One did,  
and established that which lives, his Sign (Word).

*Mandaean Prayer Book 135; cf. CPM pp.123–24*

The Fragrance of Truth, the Saviour, the “Good One” comes to this world and “established that which lives, his Sign” – the Word of Life by which souls are ‘signed’ or ‘sealed’ – baptized or initiated. At this, there is consternation

among the powers who administer or rule this world, because they realize that the Saviour has the power to extricate souls from their grip. The poet speaks of the “planets” – elsewhere in Mandaean literature also called “the Seven”,<sup>1</sup> a reference to the personified forces of the sun, the moon and the five planets known to the astrologers of those times. It means the powers of destiny and *karma*, an allusion to ancient Middle Eastern astrology:

The planets assembled, they went –  
 they confronted him that ruled them (the negative power),  
 saying to him,  
 “Have you not seen, O *Alāha-Alihun* (God of Gods)  
 that a Fragrance has come from its Source,  
 a Fragrance from its Source has come? ...

“It calls and makes the dead live,  
 and rouses the dead and the sleeping;  
 It awakens souls who are fit for  
 and worthy of the place of light.

“This, this has the Good One done,  
 and has established that which lives, his Sign.”

*Alāha-Alihun* opened his mouth,  
 saying to His sons, His first-born:  
 “Come, come, my children,  
 my first-born and my offspring!  
 Listen to the thing which I say to you!  
 If you find a holy man,  
 bow yourselves low before him:  
 One bow for himself, and the second  
 for the Fragrance of Life which rests upon him.”

*Mandaean Prayer Book 135; cf. CPM p.124*

Here, in the poetic imagination of the writer, even the negative power bows down before a “holy man” for, says that ruler, “the Fragrance of Life ... rests upon him”.

In other places in the Mandaean literature, the identification of the Fragrance or Perfume with the Voice of God, the divine Music, is explicit:

My ears have heard the Voice of Life,  
 my nostrils have breathed the Perfume of Life.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 104, CPM p.103*

See also: **Breath of God.**

1. *Mandaean Prayer Book* 1, 25, 31, 67, 73, 74, 94, 113, 114, *CPM* pp.1–2, 22, 31, 53, 62, 69, 98, 110, 200 *passim*.

### **Fruit of Life, Fruit of Light, Fruit of Immortality, Fruit of the Tree of Life**

(He. *pri*, fruit) The fruit of the Tree of Life; hence, a general term implying the creative Power, eternity or union with God, depending on the context. Although there are antecedents in earlier Mesopotamian texts, the origins of the term in extant literature can be traced to the *Genesis* story. God permits Adam and Eve to eat the Fruit of the Tree of Life, but instead they eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, of the duality of this world. They reject the spiritual fruit of the Word, which gave them eternal life, and they eat the fruit that sentences them to death in this world. As a result, they are no longer able to eat from the Tree of Life, no longer able to draw consciously on the spiritual sustenance of the creative Power.

Terms such as the Fruit of Life are commonly found in Christian, Manichaean and other early Middle Eastern mystic writings. The fifth- or sixth-century Christian, Isaac of Antioch, for instance, speaks of the spiritual “Fruit of Light” which hangs from the “Tree” of Life:

Come, marvel at the Tree,  
that grows without watering,  
and on which hangs the Fruit of Light.

*Isaac of Antioch, IADS1 p.256; cf. MEM p.140*

Another early Christian, Ephraim Syrus, uses the term extensively in his writings, as in:

The Tree of Life will satisfy you,  
and extend to you its Living Fruit.

*Ephraim Syrus, Repentance of Nineveh; cf. RN p.180*

In the gnostic *Trimorphic Protennoia*, the “Fruit of Life” is equated with the Word and the “Living Water”:

It (the Word) is a hidden light,  
bearing the Fruit of Life,  
pouring forth Living Water  
from the invisible, unpolluted, immeasurable Spring.

*Trimorphic Protennoia 46:16–19, NHS28 pp.424–25*



In one of the Manichaeian psalms, the “Fruit” is identified with the divine *Nous* (Intelligence) and the “Son” of God:

Jesus, the Tree of Life, is the Father,  
the Fruit, the *Nous* of Light, is the Son,  
the Maiden (of Light), this sweet one, is the Holy Spirit.

*Manichaeian Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.116*

In another psalm, in praise of Jesus, the “flourishing Fruit of the imperishable Tree” is equated with the “Spring of Living Water”:

You are a Spring of Living Water,  
the mysteries of the Father being revealed to You....  
You are the flourishing Fruit  
of the imperishable Tree....  
Good the Tree, good the Fruit,  
good also the sweet taste, too.

*Manichaeian Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.185*

The metaphor is also common among the Mandaean texts. In one prayer, for instance, it is likened to *Kūshṭā*, divine Truth:

You (*Kūshṭā*) are the Medicine that cures pain,  
the Healer who cures all who love His Name....  
You are a Fruit, of pleasing taste and without blemish.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 179; cf. CPM p.162*

Some of the later Jewish mystics of the Kabbalist period described the fruit of the Tree of Life as the *Shekhinah* – the divine indwelling presence active in the creation.

See also: **Amar Phal, Tree of Life.**

**gupt(ī) Bāṇī, gupt(ī) Nām** (Pu) *Lit.* hidden or secret (*gupt, guptī*) Sound (*Bāṇī*) or Name (*Nām*); the hidden or unmanifest Word; an expression used for the creative Power or Sound Current:

The man, unto whom the unmanifest *Gurbāṇī* (*guptī Bāṇī*, hidden Sound) becomes manifest, comes to know the true Lord, O Nānak.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 944, MMS*

See also: **Bāṇī, Nām.**

**Guru kī Bānī, Gurubānī** (H), **Gur kī Bāṇī, Gurbāṇī** (Pu) *Lit.* the words, sayings or discourses (*bānī, bāṇī*) of (*kī*) a *Guru*, spiritual Master or holy person; the written teachings of Saints; sometimes a particular book such as the *Ādi Granth*. Because the *Guru* reveals the secret of the divine Word to the disciple, helping him from within to attach his soul to it, so the term also refers to the creative Power of God, the mystic Voice, Discourse or Word of the *Guru*:

The *Guru*'s Word (*Gurbāṇī*) is heard in the four corners of the world,  
and, through it, the mortal merges in true Name.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 1065, MMS*

See also: **Bānī**.

**Hand of God, Hand of the Father, Hand of the Lord** In biblical and allied literature, the hand of God is a general metaphor for anything done by God – by ‘His hand’. However, there are places where the term seems to be more pointed, meaning specifically God’s will as His creative Power, the manifestation of His Word in the creation. In some cases, it is the right hand (He. *yamin*) which is mentioned. The right hand is used in most languages as a common idiom for strong and definitive action, since it is usually the strongest and most dexterous. However, there are a number of instances where the meaning is more specifically that of the divine creative power, as in *Isaiah*, when *Yahweh* ‘says’:

I am the first, I am also the last.  
My Hand laid the foundations of (the) earth,  
and my Right Hand spread out the heavens.

*Isaiah 48:12–13, JB*

God’s “Right Hand” also appears in the *Psalms*:

The heavens are Yours and the earth is Yours,  
You founded the world and all it holds,  
You created north and south....  
Yours was the arm, and Yours the prowess,  
mighty and exalted Your Right Hand.

*Psalms 89:11–13, JB*

I sing for joy in the shadow of Your wings;  
My soul clings close to You,  
Your Right Hand supports me.

*Psalms 63:7–8, JB*

Bring rescue to those You love,  
save with Your Right Hand, and answer us!

*Psalm 60:5, JB*

In the Manichaean psalms in Coptic, the devotee speaks in a similar manner of the protection and blessing afforded by God's "Right Hand":

In a moment, my God, Your mercy became one with me.  
Because of Your strong protection,  
lo, my diseases passed far from me.  
Lo, joy has overtaken me  
through Your Right Hand that came to me.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.153*

One of the early Christian gnostic writers is even more explicit. He says that this "Hand of the Lord" has created everything:

Only the Hand of the Lord has created all these things.  
For this Hand of the Father ... forms all.

*Teachings of Silvanus 115, NHS30 pp.360–61*

The writer of the early Christian *Odes of Solomon*, who uses many terms for the Creative Word, was also fond of the expression, using it in a number of these odes. The "Hand of the Lord" is the power by which a soul is "planted" or initiated:

My foundations were laid by the Hand of the Lord,  
for He planted me.  
He dug in the root and watered it,  
and made it firm and blessed it,  
and its fruits will be forever....

And the Lord alone is to be praised for His planting,  
and for His skill in cultivation:  
For His care, for the blessing of His lips,  
for the beautiful planting made by His Right Hand –  
And for the existence of His planting,  
and for the Thought of His Mind.

*Odes of Solomon 38:16–17, 19–21*

It is the support of the individual:

The Right Hand of the Lord is with you,  
and will be your Helper.

And peace was prepared for you,  
 before your war began.  
 So hear the Word of Truth,  
 and receive the Knowledge of the Most High.

*Odes of Solomon 8:6–8*

And:

Turn not Thy compassion away from me, O Lord,  
 and take not Thy kindness from me.  
 Stretch out to me at all times Thy Right Hand,  
 and be my guide even unto the end,  
 according to Thy good pleasure.

*Odes of Solomon 14:3–4*

It is the means of “salvation”:

Thy Right Hand makes salvation attainable.  
 Let it receive men from all quarters,  
 preserving all those who are encompassed by evil.

*Odes of Solomon 18:7*

And it frees souls from the grip of Satan, releasing them from the death of physical entombment:

Thy Right Hand destroyed his (the serpent’s) evil poison,  
 and Thy Hand cleared the Way for those who believe in Thee.  
 It chose them from the graves,  
 and separated them from the dead.

*Odes of Solomon 22:7–8*

In the early Christian allegorical story of *Joseph and Aseneth*, Joseph, who symbolizes the Saviour and the *Logos*, prays to God for His blessings on Aseneth, who at this point in the story seems to symbolize the soul. He calls for the blessing of “Your Holy Spirit”, “Your hidden Hand”, “Your Bread of Life” and “Your Cup of Blessing” – all metaphors for the Creative Word:

Do You, O Lord, bless this virgin, and quicken her,  
 and renew her with Your Holy Spirit,  
 and remould her by Your hidden Hand,  
 and make her alive again with Your Life.  
 And may she eat Your Bread of Life,  
 and may she drink the Your Cup of Blessing.

*Joseph and Aseneth 8; cf. AOT p.481, JA p.33, OTP2 p.213, UWOT p.110*

Later, when Aseneth has become transformed into the Wisdom of God, her hands have – symbolically – become the Hands of Life:

And when Joseph looked at her hands, he saw that they were the Hands of Life.

*Joseph and Aseneth 20; cf. OTP2 p.234, UWOT p.141*

In everyday language, to sit at someone's right hand was a Jewish idiom expressing favour and trust. It appears in Mark when James and John ask to sit at the right hand of Jesus in the kingdom of heaven,<sup>1</sup> and in Matthew where it is the mother of James and John who is said to make the request on their behalf.<sup>2</sup> According to Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, Christ the "son of man" is also said to sit at the "right hand of God" after his ascension. This is perhaps a literal understanding of the mystic ascent of the soul by means of the creative Power.<sup>3</sup> In *Acts*, *Hebrews*, *1 Peter* and the letters of Paul, Jesus is again said to be seated at the "right hand of God".<sup>4</sup> *Acts* also indicates that he was raised to this height by the divine "right hand".<sup>5</sup> The meaning here must certainly be metaphorical, for there is no suggestion that God really has hands.

Later Jewish mystics have commonly interpreted the right hand side as a reference to the positive or active side of the arrangement of the *sefirot* (divine emanations). At the top of the 'right' pillar, for example, is *Hokhmah* (Wisdom), the second *sefirah*, which is understood to mean God's primal Word or Will, also called the divine "Thought":

Rabbi Simeon said: "Alas for humanity, for they do not see and they do not understand. When it arose in Thought before the Holy One, blessed be He, to create His world, all the worlds arose in one Thought, and with this Thought they were all created. This is the meaning of 'With Wisdom (*Hokhmah*) have You made them all'.<sup>6</sup> And with this Thought, which is Wisdom, this world and the world above were created.

"He stretched forth His Right Hand and created the world above. He stretched forth His left hand and created this world. This is the meaning of 'My Hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and my Right Hand has spread out the heavens. I call to them. They stand up together.'<sup>7</sup> They were all created in a single moment, at the same time, and He made this world to match the world above, and whatever exists above has its counterpart below; and whatever exists below has its counterpart in the sea, and all is one."

*Zohar 2:20a, Midrash ha-Ne'elam, WZ2 p.569*

A similar expression, God's 'outstretched arm (*zeroa' netuya*)', is also used on occasion as a metaphor for the great strength and power of the Lord, as manifested in the creation:

But the Lord, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out (outstretched) arm, Him shall ye fear, and Him shall ye worship, and to Him shall ye do sacrifice.

*2 Kings 17:36, KJV*

Some post-biblical Jewish mystics understood the term to imply an embodiment of God's power in the creation in the form of an angelic being or demiurge. This angel or creator-god, who is lower than the Godhead, originates in God and acts as the creator of the lower creation. Sometimes called *Metatron*, he was visualized as sitting at the right hand of God in the higher realms.

See also: **Fingers of God, Metatron** (4.2).

1. *Mark* 10:37–40.
2. *Matthew* 20:21–23.
3. *Mark* 12:36, 14:62, 16:19; *Matthew* 22:44, 26:64; *Luke* 20:42, 22:69.
4. *Acts* 2:34, 7:55–56; *Hebrews* 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2; *1 Peter* 3:22; *Colossians* 3:1; *Ephesians* 1:20; *Romans* 8:34.
5. *Acts* 2:33, 5:31.
6. *Psalms* 104:24.
7. *Isaiah* 48:13.

**Hari Nām** (H/Pu) *Lit.* Name (*Nām*) of God (*Hari*); the Lord's Name; a common name for the mystic Name (*Nām*) or creative Power of God. Tulsī Sāhib says that a life spent without contact with *Hari Nām* is wasted:

Your life is being wasted  
because you are not in contact with the Lord's Name (*Hari Nām*).

*Tulsīdās, Bārahmāsī, Āshārḥ 8, TDB p.2*

Sahajobāi writes that *Hari Nām* confers liberation from birth and death:

The Name of God (*Hari Nām*) is such  
that it frees you from the cycle of birth and death.  
Attach yourself to the Truth.

*Sahajobāi, Bānī, Kuṇḍalī 5:3, SBB p.47*

And Guru Rāmdās exhorts the soul to meditate on *Hari Nām*:

O my soul (*man*, mind), meditate thou  
on the Lord's Name (*Hari Nām*), the treasure of bliss:

Thiswise, thou shalt obtain honour in the Lord's court.  
 All those who remember their God, they are ferried across:  
 O my soul (*man*, mind),  
 attentively hearken thou to the Lord's Name (*Hari Nām*).

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1337, MMS*

See also: **Hari Ras, Nām**.

**Hari Om (H)** *Lit.* God (*Hari*) *Om*, where *Om*; a Vaishnavite salutation to God, conveying the idea of the divine creative Sound. The expression is often used as a *mantra*, repeated both audibly (with the throat and tongue), as well as inaudibly (in the mind).

See also: **Om**.

**Hari Ras (H/Pu)** *Lit.* juice (*ras*) of God (*Hari*); hence, Water of God, God's Elixir, divine Water, divine Nectar, divine Elixir, divine Dew; the Lord's Essence; the creative Power, understood as the divine drink and sustenance of the soul. *Ras* implies something of very sweet, pleasant and enjoyable flavour. Similar terms include *Nām Ras* (the Water of the Name), *Mahāras Nām* (the Great Elixir of the Name), *Amrit Ras* (the Water of Immortality), and so on.

The expression is used extensively in the *Ādi Granth*. It is said to be present within all souls:

O my Lord, hearing Thy beauteous Name,  
 my soul (*man*, mind) is mightily pleased.  
 The Lord God's Name (*Hari Hari Nām*) is  
 an immortalizing sweet Ambrosia (*Amrit Ras*, Elixir of Immortality),  
 which one indrinks all-too-spontaneously  
 by the *Guru*'s instructions (*gurmat*).

As the fire is locked in the wood, but it is made manifest  
 by the mortal who knows the way of rubbing the wood,  
 so is the light of the Lord's Name within all,  
 but its Quintessence (*Tatt*) is found through the *Guru*'s teachings.

The body has nine doors,  
 but insipid is the relish of all the nine doors.

It is in the tenth one,  
 that the immortalizing Nectar  
 (*Amrit Ras*, Elixir of Immortality) trickles.

Show Thou Thy mercy, compassion and kindness unto me, O my love,  
that I may drink the Lord's Elixir (*Hari Ras*)  
through the *Guru's* Word (*Shabd*).

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1323, MMS*

It is the same as the unstruck Music:

By *Guru's* instruction (*Shabd*, Word),  
I have realized the unbeaten Music (*anhat Bāñī*),  
and enjoy the divine Relish (*Hari Ras*, divine Elixir)  
of God's Name (*Hari Nām*):  
Says Nānak, the Lord Himself,  
who is potent to do all deeds, has met me.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 921, MMS*

It cleanses the soul:

When man tastes God's Elixir (*Hari Ras*),  
then becomes he immaculate:  
Nānak, true is the glory of those who are imbued with the Name (*Nām*).

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 1174, MMS*

It is also a permanent intoxicant:

He who drinks God's Elixir (*Hari Ras*) ever remains imbued:  
all other relishes wear off in a moment.  
Intoxicated with Lord's Essence (*Hari Ras*),  
one is ever happy in mind:  
In other enjoyments, anxiety befalls one.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 377, MMS*

See also: **Hari Nām, ras.**

**ha-Shem** (He) *Lit.* the (*ha*) Name (*Shem*).

See **Shem**.

**ḥiyyut** (He) *Lit.* vital force; used by the eighteenth-century Jewish mystic, the Ba'al Shem Tov; similar in meaning to *shefa* (flow, divine influx). *Ḥiyyut* is linguistically related to *ḥayyah*, the fourth level of the soul according to the Kabbalah.



See also: **ḥayyah** (5.1), **shefa**.

**Ḥokhmah** (He) *Lit.* Wisdom; the creative Power; the Creative Word; the mystic or Holy Name; commonly found in Semitic literature from pre-biblical, biblical and later times, during the Christian era, including gnostic literature; a feminine noun, often given a female voice, as in *Proverbs* and other similar texts. The earliest known use of *Ḥokhmah* as a term for a divine power is in the fifth century BCE, *Teachings of Aḥikar*.<sup>1</sup>

Use of the term among Jewish mystics evolved during post-biblical times through the development of the medieval Kabbalah. Earlier Jewish mystics commonly identified *Ḥokhmah* with the primal, creative Utterance of God, as well as with the *Shekhinah* (the presence of God in the creation). Like *Ḥokhmah*, the *Shekhinah* is also given a female voice and identity.

Jewish Kabbalists portrayed the creation of the inner realms or “worlds” using the language of the *Genesis* creation story, explaining how God used *Hokhmah* to create the world:

Rabbi Simeon said: “Alas for humanity, for they do not see and they do not understand. When it arose in Thought before the Holy One, blessed be He, to create His world, all the worlds arose in one Thought, and with this Thought they were all created. This is the meaning of ‘With Wisdom (*Ḥokhmah*) have You made them all.’”<sup>2</sup>

*Zohar* 2:20a, *Midrash ha-Ne’elam*, WZ2 p.569

In the *Zohar*, the process of creation is described in terms of the ten *sefirot* (emanations). *Ḥokhmah*, the second *sefirot*, is the divine will or “Thought” as it first manifests as the creative urge. It is the level at which the divine will or Word first becomes outflowing and dynamic, no longer remaining concealed within the Godhead.

In the *Zohar*, the *Ayn-Sof* is portrayed as the concealed Godhead. *Keter*, the first *sefirah* or emanation, pre-exists with the *Ayn-Sof*. Though *Keter*, too, is concealed at that transcendent level, it has the potential for emanation. It is hence called the ‘will-less will’. *Keter* is also called *Ayin* (Nothing).

*Ḥokhmah* is the third aspect of the Godhead; it is the level where the divine will, existing in a state of potential within *Keter*, begins to be active, though it is still aloof from the actual emanation of the divine will. *Ḥokhmah* is also called *Yesh* (Something) – since it represents the potential for emanation from the ‘Nothing’ of *Keter*.

The process of emanation of the divine will or *Hokhmah* takes place within the highest spiritual realm – that of emanation (called ‘*olam ha-aẓilut*’), a level far higher than the physical world or higher heavenly regions.

See also: **al-‘Aql al-Awwal, sefirot** (4.1), **Wisdom**.

1. *Teachings of Aḥikar* 6–7:94–95 (2:13); cf. *ANET* p.428, *OTP2* p.499.
2. *Psalm* 104:24.

**Holy Edict** An edict is a decree or order issued by a ruling body; mystically, the creative Power, the divine Order or Law of God; used in translations of the Manichaean texts from Chinese Turkestan:

The great Saint is perforce the second venerable Lord...  
To the voluntary, upright and pure devotees,  
he makes known the Holy Edict and gives them understanding.

*Manichaean Hymns; cf. LSMH p.177:15*

See also: **Command, Law**.

**Holy Ghost** Used by the translators of the *King James Version* of the Bible for the Holy Spirit or Word of God in its role as inner guide to a human being; one of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) of Christian theology, understood to be merged in one Godhead. In the seventeenth century, when the King James translation was made (1611), the word ‘ghost’ was commonly used for the soul or spirit, as in the expression, ‘giving up the ghost’.

See also: **Spirit**.

**Holy Name** See **Name of God**.

**Holy Spell** The creative Power; that which entrances and captivates the soul; used in the Manichaean Chinese texts from Chinese Turkestan, characterized by a mix of terminology from different religious traditions, where the devotee begs “Jesus Buddha” to forgive him for the sins of countless past lives. Among many similar pleas, he begs:

Pray dispel my morbidity and dullness of many *kalpas* (ages)....  
Silence them with the Holy Spell and drive them from me.

*Manichaean Hymns, LSMH p.178:33*

**Holy Spirit** See **Spirit**.

**honey, honeycomb** Mystically, honey and honeycomb are part of a family of metaphors which describe the spiritual sweetness and nourishment derived by the soul from contact with the divine music of the Word within. In *Proverbs*, for instance, honey is likened to “Wisdom for your soul”, Wisdom being a term for the divine creative power:

Eat honey, my son, since it is good;  
Honey that drips from the comb is sweet to the taste:  
and such is knowledge of Wisdom for your soul.

*Proverbs 24:13–14, JB*

In the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*, according to a literary style of the times, Wisdom herself, a feminine noun, makes the invitation:

Come unto me all ye that desire me,  
fill yourselves with my fruits;  
For my memory is sweeter than honey,  
my inheritance than honeycomb.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 24:19–20; cf. in OPJG p.61*

Similarly, the biblical psalmists speak of the bliss of contact with the *Torah* (Teaching, Word, divine Law) as more sweet and nourishing than honey:

Meditating all day on your Law (*Torah*),  
how I have come to love it! ...  
I refrain my feet from every evil path,  
the better to observe your Word....  
Your promise, how sweet to my palate!  
Sweeter than honey to my mouth!  
Your precepts endow me with (spiritual) perception:  
I hate (turn away from) all deceptive paths.

*Psalm 119:97, 101, 103–4, JB*

See also: **milk and honey**.

**Hukm, al-** (A/P), **Hukam** (H/Pu) *Lit.* command, decree, order, rule (*hukm*); the divine Will, Fiat, Command or Order (*al-Hukm*); hence, the divine creative Will or Power. The term is used in the *Qurʿān*:

And call not, besides *Allāh*, on another god.  
There is no god but He.

Everything (that exists) will perish,  
 except His own Face.  
 To Him belongs the Command (*al-Ḥukm*),  
 and to Him will you (all) be brought back.

*Qur'ān 28:88; cf. AYA*

And:

Say: "For me, I (work) on a clear Sign from my Lord,  
 but you reject Him.  
 What you would see hastened is not in my power.  
 The Command (*al-Ḥukm*) rests with none but *Allāh*:  
 He declares the Truth, and He is the best of judges."

*Qur'ān 6:57; cf. AYA*

*Hukam* is one of the more common names for the divine creative power used by mystics of northern India, where Muslim influence has been considerable. The term appears throughout the *Ādi Granth*, where it is generally translated as the divine Command, Ordinance, Will or Law. This Command or Law is the hidden Power that has created the creation. Guru Amardās writes:

By His Order (*Hukam*), the Lord hast created the world  
 of the myriad kinds of beings.  
 O my incomprehensible and infinite true Lord,  
 how great is Thy Order (*Hukam*), I know not.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 786, MMS*

Guru Nānak says that everything happens by this "Command":

By the Lord's Order (*Hukam*), bodies are produced  
 (forms come into being).  
 His Order (*Hukam*), cannot be narrated (described).  
 With His Fiat (*Hukam*), the souls come into being,  
 and with His Fiat (*Hukam*), greatness is obtained.  
 By His Command (*Hukam*), the mortals are made high and low,  
 and by His ... Command (*Hukam*), they obtain woe and weal.  
 Some obtain gifts through His Order (*Hukam*),  
 and some, through His Order (*Hukam*),  
 are ever made to wander in transmigration.  
 All are subject to His Fiat (*Hukam*),  
 and none is exempt from His Fiat (*Hukam*).

O Nānak, if man were to understand Lord's Fiat (*Hukam*),  
then no one would take pride.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1, MMS*

See also: **al-Amr, Command.**

**Huwa** (A), **Hū** (P), **Hu** (He) *Lit.* he; a masculine pronoun, commonly used by Sufis for the absolute, unmanifested Essence, the Supreme Being, God; also, for the creative Power. Sufis have sometimes described the creative Power as a sound which resounds "*Hū*". Hence, the Punjabi Sufi, Sulṭān Bāhū, writes:

*Hū* is within, *Hū* is without,  
*Hū* always reverberates in my heart.  
The wound in my heart aches constantly,  
with the unabating pain of *Hū*'s love.  
*Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 9, SBU p.319, SBE (8) pp.232–33*

Be steadfast in your faith, bold in your step,  
only then will you find God.  
Every pore of your body will repeat the Name of *Allāh* –  
with every breath of your life.  
Both within yourself and without,  
will you then hear the reverberating strains of *Hū*.  
*Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 49, SBU p.329; cf. SBE (47) pp.262–63*

Some mystics have used *Hū* more specifically to designate the Sound of the Greatest Name (*Ism-i A'ẓam*). Sufi mystic, Ḥaẓrat 'Ināyat Khān, writes:

The Supreme Being has been called by various names in different languages, but the mystics have known him as *Hū*, the natural Name, not man-made, the only Name of the Nameless, which all nature constantly proclaims. The sound *Hū* is most sacred; the mystics called it *Ism-i A'ẓam*, the Name of the Most High, for it is the origin and the end of every sound as well as the background of each word. The Word *Hū* is the spirit of all sounds and of all words, and is hidden within them all, as the spirit in the body. It does not belong to any language, but no language can help belonging to it. This alone is the true Name of God, a Name that no people and no religion can claim as their own.... All things and beings proclaim this Name of the Lord; for every activity of life expresses distinctly or

indistinctly this very Sound. This is the Word mentioned in the Bible as existing before the light came into being: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”<sup>1</sup>

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 p.64*

‘Ināyat Khān describes this *Hū*, the eternal Sound, as the original Sound. He describes the lowest manifestation of this eternal Sound, as it presents itself in ten different aspects “through ten different tubes of the body”. He is identifying it with the Sound described in the *Hamṣa Upanishad*:<sup>2</sup>

This Sound develops through ten different aspects because of its manifestation through ten different tubes of the body; it sounds like thunder, the roaring of the sea, the jingling of bells, running water, the buzzing of bees, the twittering of sparrows, the *vīṇā* (a stringed instrument), the whistle, or the sound of *shankha* (conch), until it finally becomes *Hū*, the most sacred of all sounds.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 p.64*

Rūmī distinguishes spoken and written words from the mystical Word, *Hū* – the one real and eternal Being. “Words are like the shell,” he says, not the “kernel”. Words spoken with self-will are as short-lived and meaningless as words written on water. In fact, Rūmī hints that words only serve to mask the emptiness of religious and philosophical intellectualism. The words of mystics, on the other hand, jealously hide the secrets of the love and bliss of mystic transport. Only by abandoning egotism and dying to the individual sense of self will the true “message from *Hū*” be heard:

What is skin? Specious words, like ripples on water  
that have no permanence.

Know that these words are like the shell,  
and the meaning is like the kernel;

These words are like the form,  
and the meaning is like the spirit.

The shell hides the defect of the bad kernel;  
It also hides jealously the secrets of the good kernel.

When the pen is of wind and the scroll of water,  
whatever you write perishes speedily;

It is written on water:

If you seek constancy from it,  
you will return biting your hands in disappointment.

The wind in men is vanity and desire;  
 When you have abandoned vanity,  
 then is the time for the message from *Hū*.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1096–101; cf. MJR2 pp.61–62*

*Hū* is sometimes used in the emphatic form, “*Hū-Hū*”, particularly to emphasize that God can be heard as the divine Sound. Thus, Paltū, an eighteenth-century Indian mystic, writes:

I speak of the land which has an opening  
 in the midst of the sky.  
 Within that land resides the Monarch,  
 whom you see without eyes;  
 Resplendent is His face, and His glory  
 casts a hundred thousand suns into the shade.  
 O Paltū, *Hū-Hū* rings in that region sublime,  
 and with that Sound, my heart is enraptured.

*Paltū, Bānī 2, Jhūlnā 55, PSB2 pp.55–56*

*Hū-Hū* is also used in Sufi literature to express the ecstatic rapture of the spiritual experience. In Sufi imagery, the song sung by the nightingale (the lover, the soul) is *Hū-Hū*. In the *Maṣnavī*, Rūmī relates the story of a mystic who is so ‘drunk’ with the bliss of the divine Sound that he can only utter the sound, “*Hū-Hū*”. An inspector (symbolizing a religious authority) asks him to say “Ah”, so that he can smell his breath, and send him to jail for drinking. But “Ah” is an expression of grief, and the mystic ‘drunkard’ can only utter, “*Hū-Hū*”:

The Inspector came at midnight to a certain place:  
 he saw a man lying at the bottom of a wall.  
 He cried, “Hey, you are drunk:  
 tell me what have you been drinking?”  
 Said the man, “I have drunk of this which is in the jar.”

“Pray,” said he, “explain what is in the jar.”  
 He replied, “Some of what I have drunk.”  
 “But,” said the Inspector, “this is hidden from sight.”

He asked again, “What is it that you have drunk?”  
 He rejoined, “That which is hidden in the jar.”

These questions and answers were becoming a circle.  
 The Inspector was left in the mud, like an ass.

The Inspector said to him, “Come now, say ‘Ah’”;  
But the drunken man, at the moment of utterance,  
said, “*Hū-Hū*.”

“I told you to say ‘Ah’,” said he, “you are saying ‘*Hū*’.”

“Because I am glad,” he replied,  
“while you are bent with grief. ‘Ah’ is uttered  
on account of pain and grief and injustice;  
The ‘*Hū-Hū*’ of the wine drinkers is from joy.”

The Inspector said, “I know nothing about this.  
Get up, get up! Don’t retail mystic lore,  
and leave off this wrangling.”

“Go away,” said the man,  
“what have you to do with me?”  
“You are drunk,” the Inspector said,  
“Get up and come to prison.”

Said the drunken man, “O Inspector,  
let me alone and go away.  
How can you extract promises  
from one who has nothing?  
If indeed I had had the power to walk,  
I should have gone to my house –  
and then how would this affair have occurred?  
Were I still possessed of (only human) understanding  
and of unreal existence,  
I should be on the bench,  
(giving instruction) like the *Shaykhs*.”

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:2387–99; cf. MJR2 p.345*

The worldly man cannot understand what it is that the mystic has ‘drunk’;  
nor can the mystic explain this mystery to him. In his ignorance, the worldly  
man tries to confine the mystic, but he cannot do so. One who has lost his  
self in the bliss of *Hū-Hū*, cannot be confined.

See also: **Huwa** (2.1).

1. *John* 1:1, *KJV*.

2. *Haṃsa Upanishad* 16; in e.g. *TMU* pp.163, 299.



**Idea See Thought.**

**Image of God** An image is a representation or likeness. From a mystical point of view, it is generally the soul which is said to be made in the likeness or image of God, because the soul is made of the same essence as God. The metaphor comes from *Genesis*:

So God created man in His own image,  
in the image of God created He him.

*Genesis 1:27, KJV*

However, there is an alternative interpretation of the term. Philo Judaeus says that the Image of God is actually the *Logos*, this being the first reflection, projection or likeness of God:

He (Moses) calls the invisible and spiritual divine *Logos*, the Image of God. And of this, the image (in its turn) is that spiritual Light, which has been created as the image of the divine *Logos*.

*Philo Judaeus, On the World's Creation 8; cf. PCW1 pp.24–25, TGH1 p.232*

And:

The *Logos* is the Likeness (Image) of God by which the whole cosmos was fashioned.

*Philo Judaeus, On Monarchy II:5; cf. TGH1 p.234, WPJ3 p.194*

The same interpretation is voiced by Paul when he writes of God's creative Power as His "dear Son"<sup>1</sup> and "First-born", describing him as he

who is the Image of the invisible God,  
the First-born of every creature:  
For by him were all things created,  
that are in heaven, and that are in earth,  
visible and invisible,  
whether they be thrones, or dominions,  
or principalities, or powers:  
All things were created by him, and for him.

*Colossians 1:15–16, KJV*

Again, in a passage from the early Christian *Doctrine of Addai the Apostle*, there is an affirmation of the soul's immortality and its transition at death to higher realms. "The souls of men" do not die with the body, asserts the

writer, but “live and rise and have mansions”. The consciousness and life of the soul do not cease, he says, for the “Image of God” – the *Logos* – dwells within it:

All the souls of men, which depart from this body, die not; but they live and rise and have mansions, and a dwelling place of rest, for the understanding and the intelligence of the soul do not cease, because the Image of God (the *Logos*) is reflected in it, which dies not.

*Doctrine of Addai the Apostle; cf. DAA pp.44–45*

See also: **zelem** (5.1).

1. *Colossians* 1:13, *KJV*.

**immortal food** The food of the gods in classical mythology, said to impart immortality; ambrosia; hence, mystically, the Word or *Logos*. Since the soul derives spiritual nourishment from contact with the Word as the source of all life and being, it has commonly been described by mystics of many lands as the food and drink of the soul – the immortal food, ambrosia, the Bread of Life, the draught of Life and so on. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, it is described as

the immortal food of the Tree of Life  
and the draught of the True Vine.

*Acts of Thomas* 36; cf. AAA p.177, ANT p.382

See also: **Amrit, food and drink of the soul**.

**imra** (pl. *imarot*) (He) *Lit.* word.

See **ma’amarot**.

**Intellect** The capacity for thinking, reasoning and understanding, as opposed to feeling or desiring; used by scholars to translate terms such as the Greek, *Logos* and *Nous*, and the Arabic, ‘*aql*, often when the terms ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ would be more appropriate, as in such expressions as the ‘intellectual world’ or ‘intelligible world’, where the ‘spiritual world’ would make better sense.

See also: ‘**aql** (5.1), **al-‘Aql al-Awwal**, **Logos**, **Mind**, **Nous**.

**Intellectus Agens** (L) *Lit.* Active Intelligence; Active Intellect.

See **Active Intellect**, **Nous**.

**irjīʿī** (A) *Lit.* Come back! Return! Islamic usage stems from the *Qurʾān*, where God says:

O soul at peace, return (*irjīʿī*) unto thy Lord,  
 well pleased (thyself), well pleasing (unto Him)!  
 Enter thou among my servants!  
 Enter thou my paradise!

*Qurʾān* 89:27–30, *KI*

“*Irjīʿī!*” is God’s call to the soul to return to Him. It is thus used to mean the divine Call or Power by which souls return to Him. In Sufi imagery, God is likened to a king with his falcon (the soul). When the king calls, “*Irjīʿī!*” the falcon returns to alight on his wrist. Rūmī relates a seemingly personal story in which “the King” (*Shāh*, Master) is asked by an old man to have him (Rūmī) bound in chains:

An old man came before the King and said,  
 “Bind him (Rūmī) with chains,  
 for this madman has caused a great deal  
 of uproar and destruction among the devils.”  
 My King (*Shāh*) said, “This madman can be held  
 by no chain but my tresses –  
 you do not know his character.  
 He will snap thousands of fetters and fly to our hand.  
 He will become (the meaning of),  
 “To us they shall return,”<sup>1</sup>  
 for he is a royal falcon.”

*Rūmī, Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīz* 2509:26546–48, *KSD5* p.236, *KDS2* p.932, in *SPL* p.303

Rūmī also portrays the soul as an imprisoned bird who only breaks free from its cage (the body) when it hears the call from the divine King, “Return (*Irjīʿī!*)”:

That imprisoned nightingale called the soul  
 has no power in himself to break open the cage.  
 On that day when, at last, the time of reunion comes,  
 and this bird flies off from its cage,

my spirit, having heard the King calling, “Come back (*Irji’i*)!”,  
in one great flight, will go back to the King’s hand.

*Rūmī, in PSR p.67*

In order to hear this call of the Lord, “Return (*Irji’i*)!”, Rūmī adds that the physical ears and other senses must be closed and the mind must be stilled, so that the inner ear may hear that “*Irji’i*!” –

Put cotton wool in the ear of the lower sense,  
take from your eyes the bandage of that (higher) sense!  
The ear of the head is the cotton wool  
of the ear of the conscience:  
Until the former becomes deaf,  
that inward ear is deaf.  
Become without sense and without ear and without thought,  
that you may hear the Call, “Return (*Irji’i*)!”

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:566–68; cf. MJR2 p.33*

1. *Qur’ān* 21:93.

**Ism al-A‘ẓam, al-** (A), **Ism-i A‘ẓam** (P) *Lit.* the Greatest (*A‘ẓam*) Name (*Ism*); the Supreme Name, the Exalted Name; the Name of God. The names given to *Allāh* are endowed with considerable importance in Islam, and repeating a list of ninety-nine names of God is said to invoke great blessings. But the *Ism-i A‘ẓam* is held to be different from any of the spoken and written names applied to God. It is the divine source of all other names:

The Greatest Name (*Ism-i A‘ẓam*) is the source of all names.  
It is the inner reality of all things.  
It is the ocean, and the world its mere waves.  
But he alone knows this, who is one of us (*faqīrs*).

*al-Qāshānī, in SBSU p.128, BS p.104*

References to *Ism-i A‘ẓam* have given rise to much speculation among Muslim scholars and theologians as to what this ‘Greatest Name’ could be. According to tradition, the Prophet said that this ‘Greatest Name’ occurs in the *Qur’ān*, either in the verse which says “(All) faces shall be humbled before the Living (*al-Ḥayy*), the Self-Subsisting (*al-Qayyūm*)”<sup>1</sup> or in the verses which say, “*Allāh!* There is no god but He (*Huwa*) – the Living (*al-Ḥayy*), the Self-Subsisting (*al-Qayyūm*).”<sup>2</sup> It has therefore been suggested that the Greatest Name must be *Allāh*, *Huwa*, *al-Ḥayy* or *al-Qayyūm*. Others,

like the Sufis of the *Chishtīyah* order and Ḥaẓrat Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī (1329–1410 CE), have said that *al-Ḥayy al-Qayyūm* is the Greatest Name, to which others have added that *al-Ḥayy* is the Great Name.

To the mystic, however, *Ism-i A‘zam* is a term for the mystic Name, the divine Creative Word. ‘Ināyat Khān says that *Ism-i A‘zam* is the reality underlying all religions and all words:

When one has come to understand the mystery of this Word, one understands the mystery of all religion, for all religion lies in this one Word, *Ism-i A‘zam*.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK12 p.118*

No one can claim this Word as belonging to his language; it is a Word which belongs to no language.... All other words have been derived from it, for *Ism-i A‘zam* is the spirit of all words; it is the root of all other words.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK12 p.122*

Rūmī calls the Greatest Name the “essence of existence”, in fact, God Himself:

The Greatest Name (*Ism-i A‘zam*)  
is the Great God (*Allāh al-‘Azīm*) Himself.  
It is the essence of existence (*lit.* the spirit of spirit),  
and brings life even to dead bones.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI, MR6 p.529; MMM6 p.144*

“Dead bones” symbolize the soul entombed in the death of a physical body. Rūmī also says that “Your Greatest Name” is the link between him and God:

O God, Your Holy Name (*Ism-i Ḥāt-i Pāk*) is my true friend.  
Your Greatest Name (*Ism-i A‘zam*) brings me close to You.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI, MR6 p.528, MMM6 p.144*

He goes on, in adoration, to describe the sweetness of the experience of *Ism-i A‘zam*:

O God, how sweet is your Name (*Ism*)!  
My very existence has become sugar and honey in it.  
O God, what rapture there is in Your Name (*Ism*)!  
Every letter in it puts me into ecstasy.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI, MR6 p.528, MMM6 p.144*

Ḥāfiẓ likens the Greatest Name (*Ism-i A'zam*) to the famous signet ring of Solomon. In ancient times, people wore a ring engraved with their personal seal for authenticating documents. Solomon, traditionally understood as a sage, had a ring with a different kind of power – it gave him complete knowledge of the language of birds and animals. Taking Solomon in the role of the sage – which to Ḥāfiẓ meant his own *Pīr* or Master – he says that in the orbit of this ring, *Ahriman* (the devil) has no power:

The splendours of the Greatest Name (*Ism-i A'zam*)  
shine not on *Ahriman*.

This is your land, you have the signet ring:  
whatever you wish – that you may command!

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.235, DHM (505:3) p.453, DIH p.375; cf. DHWC (506:3) p.831*

See also: **asmā'** (2.2), **ch'áng Míng, Nām, Name, Shem**.

1. *Qur'ān* 20:111.
2. *Qur'ān* 2:255, 3:2.

**Ism al-dhātī, al-** (A), **Ism-i Żātī** (P) *Lit.* the inherent (*dhātī*) Name (*Ism*); the essential Name, the mystic Name; a Sufi term for the creative Power.

See also: **asmā' al-dhātīyah** (2.2).

**jewel(s)** A precious or semiprecious stone, often sparkling; hence also, something precious or sparkling; used in Manichaean texts as a general term for various inner powers, deities and so on, often in the plural. In some instances, however, the power referred to is clearly the divine creative power, the Creative Word. In a long eulogy of the mystic Mānī in texts from Chinese Turkestan, the “good Law” – a term for the Word – is portrayed as a “jewel”:

With your unsurpassed holy tongue  
you deigned to generously bestow  
the jewel of the good Law  
upon us miserable living beings.

*Manichaean Hymns, TTT3 p.204:56, MTP pp.171, 184:108–10; cf. GSR p.282:1.56*

In another Manichaean text, the jewel is named *Srōshāv* (Sound), a Parthian term derived from a Zoroastrian (Avestan) word for the divine Sound (*Sraosha*). Here, the *Srōshāv* has become a term for God:

They (a congregation of heavenly beings) raise their voices in prayer and worship to the great jewel *Srōshāv*, the primeval One, the righteous God, the highest of the gods, and they say: “You, You are the Father of Light, existing from times primeval, since eternity; and to Your dominion there is no harm.”

*Manichaean Text, MM3 p.849ff., RMP ac; cf. ML p.136*

The Manichaean Chinese texts from Chinese Turkestan are notable for their synthesis of Judaic, Christian, Greek, Zoroastrian and Indian terminology. In one place, the disciple petitions the Master:

Give to all living beings  
the Jewel (*Chintāmaṇi*) that fulfils their desires.

*Manichaean Hymns; cf. LSMH p.180:47*

Here, the “Jewel” is the *Chintāmaṇi* of Indian mythology – the jewel that fulfils all wishes.

Manichaean writers are not alone in speaking of the Creative Word or divine Name as the *Chintāmaṇi*. A number of Indian mystics have done the same, also describing it more generally as a jewel (H. *ratna*, Pu. *ratana*):

God’s Name (*Hari Nām*) is the emerald, jewel (*ratana*) and ruby.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 880, MMS*

The praise of the Lord’s Name (*Rām Nām*)  
is an invaluable treasure (*ratana*, jewel),  
which God has deposited with the Saint.

Whosoever accepts the *Guru*’s Word (*Bachan*) as true and abiding,  
taking out this treasure, the *Guru* places it before him.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1326, MMS*

A similar image was prevalent in early Jewish esoteric mythology. According to a fifth-century legend, when Adam and Eve were banished from the garden of Eden, they lost the primordial celestial light that was God’s first creation. However, a small part of this miraculous light, which had allowed Adam “to see from one end of the world to the other”, is preserved in a “jewel known as the *Tzohar*”:

Without this light, the world seemed dark to them, for the sun shone like a candle in comparison. But God preserved one small part of that precious light inside a glowing stone, and the angel *Razi’el* delivered this stone to Adam after they had been expelled from the garden of

Eden as a token of the world they had left behind. This jewel, known as the *Tzohar*, sometimes glowed and sometimes hid its light.<sup>1</sup>

*"The Tzohar", in Gabriel's Palace, GPJ p.59*

At his death, Adam entrusted the *Tzohar* to his son Seth who used it to help him gain spiritual insight. The story goes that Seth peered into the stone and became a great prophet. It was then passed down to Enoch, who also become spiritually evolved by means of it, eventually ascending to heaven, and being transformed into the angel *Metatron*.

According to the legend, the stone was then passed down through the patriarchs and prophets, revealing how each one – Methusalah, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses – used the stone to come closer to God and gain spiritual insight.

The jewel seems to symbolize the primal divine wisdom, the spiritual knowledge, the inner light, that is the heritage of humanity. It is the link between man and God. The legend says that God had originally bestowed this divine light, or wisdom, upon Adam. Adam lost touch with it when he was disobedient to God and listened to the voice of his ego. God's preservation of it in the form of a stone which was passed on from one prophet to the next is a poetic way of saying that this wisdom still remains within the realm of human realization.

See also: **Chintāmaṇi, Diadem, jewels (4.2), pearl.**

1. "The *Tzohar*", in *GPJ* pp.59–62; based on the *Babylonian Talmud*, *Ḥagigah* 12a; *Midrash Rabbah*, *Genesis* 31:11, and other sources.

**Jordan** A river rising from several head streams in Syria and Lebanon that flows south into Israel, through the Sea of Galilee and into the Dead Sea. Most of its journey lies below sea level. The name is derived from the Hebrew, *Yarden*, from the root *yarad* (descend, go down). In Syriac, a language akin to Aramaic and Hebrew, the word for a river is *yardah*. According to Christian tradition, John the Baptist and others used the Jordan for baptism. It is particularly suited for this purpose because, unlike other Syrian and Palestinian rivers, it never gets really cold, making it suitable for baptism anytime of the year.

Among the Mandaeans or Nāṣōraeans of southern Iraq, the word for running water used in baptism, as well as for any stream or river, is a 'jordan (*yardna*)'. But the Jordan, as a heavenly river, occupies a central place in their religious life and must relate to their earliest origins, since the Mandaeans claim that John the Baptist was a founder member of their sect, though they lost contact long ago with their Palestinian roots.<sup>1</sup>



In Mandaean mystical mythology, the heavenly Jordan, also known as *Biriawīsh*, is the source of the Living Water of the creative Power that brings life into the creation:

*Biriawīsh*, source of Living Waters,  
first upsurging that sprang forth (from God),  
great outburst of the radiance of all-abundant Life!

*Mandaean Prayer Book 44, CPM p.40*

The Mandaeans' connection with John the Baptist, together with their mystical interpretations of the heavenly Jordan, suggest that the gospel accounts of John's Jordan baptisms may actually be literalizations of mystic baptism – an immersion in the Living Waters of the Word, not in exterior water.

In one Mandaean text, the mythical Saviour, Hībil (the biblical Abel, son of Adam), baptizes or initiates souls in this mystic Jordan, enabling them to reach the eternal abode of God by the power of a "Staff of Water" – the creative Power:

By it (the power of the Staff of Water),  
Hībil raises up living souls in the Jordan,  
those worthy of the great place of light  
and of the everlasting abode.

By it they will be established  
and raised up in the house of the mighty Life.  
It will raise those souls  
who go to the Jordan and are baptized:  
They will behold the great place of light  
and the everlasting abode.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 14; cf. CPM p.10*

In another place, the Saviour is described as "a great sprouting Shoot" who is "transplanted" from "the great Jordan" to this world, where he is known by his Voice, his Fragrance and his shining appearance:

At the beginning of the pure *kimṣa* (manifestation, creation),  
accompanied by sublime rays of light,  
I gazed and beheld a great sprouting Shoot,  
which was transplanted from within the great Jordan.  
Sublime was his Voice, his perfume fragrant,  
his appearance shining and splendid!

*Mandaean Prayer Book 126, CPM p.119*

In other instances, initiated souls are depicted as the “vines” or “plants” which grow in the Jordan:

The vines shone in the Water,  
and in the Jordan they grew mighty.  
*Mandaean Prayer Book 177; cf. CPM p.159*

And:

How lovely are the plants which the Jordan  
has planted and raised up!  
Pure fruit have they borne,  
and on their heads they set living garlands.  
*Yawar Zīwa* (Dazzling Radiance) rejoices in the good plants,  
which the Jordan has planted and raised.  
The plants rejoice and flourish  
in the Perfume of *Mandā-ḡ-Hiia* (Knowledge of Life),  
which breathes upon them.  
*Mandaean Prayer Book 83; cf. CPM pp.90–91*

The vines begin to shine when immersed in the Living Water. The souls are cleansed and purified of all their past sins, becoming aware of their own inner light and transcendence. They rise up out of the body, becoming “mighty”, full of the mystic power of the Word. But the souls have to be planted by a Saviour, here personified as *Yawar Zīwa* and *Mandā-ḡ-Hiia*. The devotee concludes:

By the bank of the great Jordan of the First Life,  
a sublime Vine stands erect.  
Each and every day my prayer and praise rises before it.  
*Mandaean Prayer Book 156; cf. CPM p.134*

The “sublime Vine”, also called the “First Vine”,<sup>2</sup> is synonymous with the “True Vine”<sup>3</sup> of John’s gospel, all being names for the creative Power. Here, the “great Jordan of the First Life” seems to be the divine Ocean from which the Living Water flows.

See also: **Living Water, River.**

1. *The Secret Adam*, E.S. Drower, SA p.xiv.
2. *Mandaean Prayer Book* 14, 31, 36, 40, 117, 373, 374, 379, CPM pp.10, 29, 37, 39, 112–13, 265, 268, 296.
3. *John 15:1ff., KJV.*

**Kalām, Kalām Allāh (A/P), Kalām al-Ḥaqq, Kalām al-Īzid (A), Kalām-i Ḥaqq, Kalām-i Īzid (P)** *Lit.* speech, conversation, dialogue, words (*kalām*); also, disputation, intellectualism; from the root *kalimah* (word). *Kalām* particularly implies spoken rather than written words. *Kalām Allāh* is the Speech of God, also translated as the Call of God. *Kalām al-Ḥaqq* (*lit.* the Speech of Truth) also means the Speech of God, as does *Kalām-i Īzid*. *Kalām* is also translated as the Word.

These terms refer to the mystic Word or Voice of God, the creative Power. The *Qurʾān* uses the word *kalām* both in the sense of conversation (such as giving advice on how to talk to nonbelievers, how to convince them of belief in the One God) and, in the mystical sense, as *Kalām Allāh*, the Speech of God. *Kalām* is sometimes used by mystics to mean theology and disputation in a pejorative sense, implying that theology is mere *kalām* – mere talk – and what is important is practice and actual realization.

Like other religions, orthodox Islam generally takes the Speech or the Word of God to mean the scriptures, in this case the *Qurʾān*. References to *Kalām Allāh* or *Kalām al-Ḥaqq* (Speech of God) are considered to mean those particular words which are recorded in the *Qurʾān*.

Mystics, however, use and understand the terms *Kalām Allāh* and *Kalām al-Ḥaqq* in the mystical sense. When God wills anything, He has only to say, “Be (*Kun*)!” – And it is.<sup>1</sup> God’s saying “Be!” to the creation is His ‘Speech’. This ‘Speech’ may be described as a current of energy or power emanating from God and enlivening the universe. It has also been called *Āvāz-i Khudā* (Voice of God), *Bāng-i āsmānī* (Call from the sky), *Ḥukm* (Order), *Amr* (Command), and many other names. It may be described as God in dynamic action. Actually, it cannot be accurately described in words at all. It has to be experienced through inner contemplation and the development of the powers of direct perception:

Alas! In the *Qurʾān*, we see nothing but black letters upon white paper. As long as you are in being (*dar vujūd*), nothing but black and white is seen; when you depart from being, the Word of God (*Kalām Allāh*) ... will obliterate you in its own being.... You will see no more blackness; ... all you will behold is white. So read the verse: “With God is the source of the Book (*Umm al-Kitāb*).”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Ayn al-Qudāt Hamadānī, TQH pp.172–73, in HSC pp.309–10*

Anqaravī alludes to the Islamic belief that Jesus received his inspiration and power from the Holy Spirit, also called the “Breath of Jesus”. This “Breath of Jesus”, he says, originates from the *Kalām al-Ḥaqq*:

When the Speech of God (*Kalām al-Ḥaqq*) comes into the heart of anyone and the divine Inspiration enters his heart and soul, its nature

is such that there is produced within him a spiritual child having the Breath of Jesus that revives the dead.

*Anqaravī, Majmū'ah al-Laṭā'if*

Likening the creative Power to “pure water”, Rūmī equates it with the *Kalām-i Īzīd* (Word of God) which removes all suffering, taking the soul into the “rose garden” of the spiritual realms:

But if you become acquainted with this pure water,  
which is the Word of God (*Kalām-i Īzīd*) and spiritual,  
all distress will vanish from the soul,  
and the heart will find its way to the rose garden (*gulistān*);  
For every one who catches a scent  
of the mystery of the scriptures  
flies into an orchard with a running brook.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:3470–72, MJR4 p.463*

See also: **Kalimah, Kun, Word.**

1. e.g. *Qur'ān* 6:73.
2. *Qur'ān* 13:39.

**Kalimah** (A/P/U), **Kalmah** (U) (pl. *kalimāt*), **Kalimat al-Ḥaqq**, **Kalimat ilāhī**, **Kalimat al-Lāh** (A), **Kalmā** (Pu/H) *Lit.* word, words, speech; mystically, the Word (*Kalimat*) or Speech of God (*al-Ḥaqq*), the divine (*ilāhī*) Word (*Kalimat*), in the sense of His creative Power. Orthodox Islam generally takes the Word or words of God to mean the *Qur'ān*:

None can change His words (*kalimāt*),  
for He is the one who hears and knows all.

*Qur'ān* 6:115; cf. AYA

But the Word of *Allāh* (*Kalimat ilāhī*)  
is exalted to the heights:  
For *Allāh* is exalted in might, wise.

*Qur'ān* 9:40, AYA

Mystics, however, understand the Word of God to be His creative Power.

Like many north Indian mystics who had been in contact with Islam and Sufism, the Punjabi mystic, Sulṭān Bāhū, speaks in a similar manner, using the Urdu variant, *Kalmah*. He describes the *Kalmah* as the only means by which the mind can be purified:

*Kalmah* cures the ailment of the heart:  
 no other medicine works.  
*Kalmah* removes all rust from the mind.  
*Kalmah* washes all stains from the soul.  
*Kalmah* is more precious than diamonds and rubies.  
*Kalmah* is the alchemist's shop, O Bāhū.  
*Kalmah* is real wealth in this world and the next.

*Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 199, SBU p.368, SBE (198) pp.364–65*

And:

By constant repetition of His *Kalmah*,  
 you will bathe yourself in its beatitude.  
 The Lord will purify you of all your sins, O Bāhū,  
 if you practise that real Name of God.

*Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 117, SBU p.347, SBE (116) pp.310–11*

The *Kalmah* taught to him by a Master, he says, resounds within him and has rid him of all troubles:

Within me resounds the melody of *Kalmah*,  
 the melody that love has taught me to hear....  
 This *Kalmah* has rid me of all afflictions  
 of the body and mind:  
 Only a Master (*Pīr*) could have taught it to me, O Bāhū.

*Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 16, SBU p.321, SBE (14) pp.236–37*

The *Kalmah* takes souls out of this world, transforming them into Saints:

The *Kalmah* has ferried millions across the ocean:  
 In hundreds of ways has it transformed  
 ordinary mortals into Saints.

*Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 148, SBU p.355, SBE (147) pp.330–31*

But this only happens when a soul is initiated into the *Kalmah*:

Only when my Master initiated me into the *Kalmah*  
 did I truly understand its meaning.

*Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 147, SBU p.354, SBE (146) pp.330–31*

See also: **Davar, Kalām, Logos, Memra, Word.**

**Kathā** (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* story, tale, narrative, utterance; a religious or spiritual story, such as those from the Hindu *Shāstras*, told in temple services, often combined with *kīrtan* (devotional songs); mystically, the Creative Word as God's Message, the Lord's Discourse, and so on. Mystics say that God's real 'Story' is His creative Power, the term often being used in a wordplay where *kathā* means both the external teachings and the internal creative Power:

God's sermons and tales (*Hari kī Kathā*, God's Message), my friend,  
the *Guru* has related to me:

A sacrifice am I unto my *Guru*, unto the *Guru*, I am a sacrifice.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 725, MMS*

O *Guru*, preach to me thou God's Discourse (*Hari Kathā*, Message):  
by thine teaching,

His discourse (*gurmat*, teaching) is enshrined in my mind.

Deliberate thou over (meditate on)

the Lord's Discourse (*Hari Kathā*), O fortunate man,

and thy God shall bless thee with the sublime and imperishable status.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 996, MMS*

The term is more commonly used for the Creative Word in expressions such as *akath Kathā* (unutterable Utterance, untold Story).

See also: **akah** (2.1), **akath Kathā**.

**Kawthar, al-** (A), **Kawśar** (P) *Lit.* good in abundance (*kawthar*); abundance; according to Islamic mythology, a freshwater spring which feeds the pool or lake (*al-ḥawḍ*) at the entrance to paradise, and from which all heavenly rivers flow; also called *Chashmah-i Kawśar* (Spring or Fountain of Abundance).

The term is derived from the root *kathara* (to outnumber), indicating abundance, together with the letter *wāw* (w) which according to some Sufis signifies *al-Wāḥid* (the Single, the One), an Arabic name for God. *Al-Kawthar* is thus taken to mean 'the abundance of the One', and the Spring of *Kawthar* is the abundant outpouring of Living Water from the one Source. It symbolizes the ever present and inexhaustible source of divine power, the overflowing fount of the Lord's creative energy, which can be contacted when the attention is turned inward towards the Unseen. It is the ever bountiful reservoir from which all divine power flows in the form of celestial music and refulgent light. Rūmī says:

Have you not read, “We have given you *Kawśar*”?  
 Why, then, are you dry and why have you remained thirsty?  
 Or perchance you are Pharaoh,  
     and for you *Kawśar*, like the Nile,  
     has turned to blood and become impure, O sick man.  
 Repent, renounce every enemy (of God)  
     who has not the Water of *Kawśar* in his cup.  
 Whoever you see flushed with joy by *Kawśar*,  
     he has the nature of Muḥammad: consort with him.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī V:1232–35; cf. MJR6 p.75*

If a man finds himself ‘dry and thirsty’, says Rūmī, it is only because he is not willing to receive it, and he adds that such a one should keep the company of a mystic whose face is flushed with the “joy” of *Kawśar*.

Rūmī also writes that by drinking deep from this Spring of Abundance the soul can leave the cage of the body. Responding to God’s call, passing through the gates of “death” is “like (drinking from) *Kawśar*”:

“When *Ḥaqq* (Truth, Reality, God) calls you,  
     you are invited to yourself.  
 Leaving (the cage of the body) is like heaven,  
     death – like (drinking from) *Kawśar*!

*Rūmī, Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 2037:21479, KSD4 p.249, DSTR p.302, GGS p.400*

According to the *Qur’ān*, prayer and sacrifice is the requirement for contact with the ‘Water’ from this abundant source:

To you have We granted  
     the Fount (*al-Kawthar*) (of Abundance).  
 So pray unto your Lord, and sacrifice.

*Qur’ān 108:1–2; cf. AYA, MGK*

Religions generally take such injunctions to prayer and sacrifice in an outward sense but, for the mystic, the true prayer is meditation upon the Word, Life Stream or River of Life, and the sacrifice acceptable to God is the sacrifice of the ego and all worldly attachments.

See also: **Āb-i Ḥayāt, amṛit sar** (4.1), **Chashmah-i Khizr, Fountains, mānsarovar** (4.1), **Spring**.

**Khiṭāb** (A/P) *Lit.* a formal or authoritative address that advises, informs and exhorts; a powerful and exhortatory speech; an allocution; mystically, the

Speech of God; has the same meaning as *Kalām*, as in *Kalām Allāh* (Speech of God) and *Kalām al-Ḥaqq* (Speech of the Truth, Speech of God), but used less frequently. Although, according to most orthodox commentators, *Khiṭāb* refers to the proclamation of divine omnipotence, Rūmī provides a mystical interpretation of the term, saying that the *Khiṭāb* heard by mystics in the inner realms is like music. He adds that listening to the music of ordinary instruments such as the rebec gives pleasure only because it reminds the soul of the divine Music:

But his object in listening to the sound of the rebec was,  
 like ardent lovers (of God),  
 to bring into his mind the fantasy  
 of that divine Allocution (*Khiṭāb*);  
 For the shrill noise of the clarion  
 and the menace of the drum  
 somewhat resemble that universal trumpet.  
 Hence, philosophers have said  
 that we received these harmonies  
 from the revolution of the celestial sphere,  
 and that this melody which people sing  
 with pandore and throat  
 is the sound of the revolutions of the sphere;  
 But the true believers say that the influences of paradise  
 made every unpleasant sound to be beautiful.  
 We have all been parts of Adam,  
 we have heard those melodies in paradise.  
 Although the water and earth of our bodies  
 have caused a doubt to fall upon us,  
 something of them still comes to our memory;  
 But since it is mingled with the earth of sorrow,  
 how should this treble and bass provide the same delight?

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:731–38; cf. MJR4 pp.312–13*

In another passage, he says that so long as the mind and physical ears are engrossed in words and the outer senses, the inner “Call” will not be heard. So long as the mind and ears are engrossed “in the conversation of wakefulness” to this world, the inner mind and ears can grasp nothing of the “conversation of sleep”, of mystic experience, when the attention is withdrawn from this world as though in sleep, but is actually super-conscious:

Beware, you who are enslaved by words and talk,  
 you who seek admonition of the speech of the tongue and of the ear.



Put cotton wool in the ear of the low (physical) sense,  
 take from your eyes the bandage of that (higher) sense!  
 The ear of the head is the cotton wool  
 of the ear of the conscience:  
 Until the former becomes deaf,  
 that inward ear is deaf.  
 Become without sense and without ear and without thought,  
 that you may hear the Call (*Khiṭāb*), “Return (*Irji’i*)!”

So long as you are engaged in the conversation of wakefulness,  
 how will you catch any scent of the conversation of sleep?  
 Our speech and action are the exterior journey:  
 the interior journey is above the sky.  
 The (physical) sense saw dryness,  
 because it was born of dryness (earth).  
 The Jesus of the spirit set foot on the sea.  
 The journey of the dry body fell on dry land:  
 the journey of the spirit set foot in the heart of the sea.

Since your life has passed in travelling on land:  
 now mountain, now river, now desert,  
 from what place will you gain the Water of Life?  
 Where will you cleave the waves of the sea?

The waves of earth are our imagination and understanding and thought;  
 The waves of water are (mystical) self-effacement  
 and intoxication and passing away (*fanā’*).  
 While you are in this (sensual) intoxication,  
 you are far from that (mystical) intoxication;  
 While you are drunken with this,  
 you are blind to that cup.  
 Outward speech and talk is as dust:  
 make a habit of silence for a time.  
 Take heed!

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:565–77; cf. MJR2 pp.33–34*

See also: **Nidā’**.

**Kol** (He) *Lit.* voice; in the Bible, the voice of God, sometimes understood as the divine creative power. In rabbinic *midrash* (commentary) and in the primary Kabbalist text, the *Zohar*, the opening verses of *Genesis*, describing God’s creation of the universe, are interpreted as creation by the mystic

Voice of God in a series of *ma'amarot* (creative utterances) – “And God said:” ... etc.<sup>1</sup>

In the Kabbalah, this *Kol* is seen as the active Principle in creation, creating and sustaining everything. Sometimes, it is a synonym for the Creative Word or Wisdom, the primary emanation of the Godhead. In other places, it is a lower level of the Word, as the aspect of the creative Power that actually implements God's will:

Rabbi Isaac said: “It is written, ‘By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made and, by the Breath of His Mouth, all their hosts.’ The ‘heavens’ mentioned here are the lower heavens, which were made by the Word of the upper heavens, through the Spirit which sent forth a Voice (*Kol*) until it reached that stream which issues and flows perennially.”

*Zohar 1:33b, ZSS1 p.126, JCL*

The *Zohar* describes creation as an expression of the ten *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities). It says that the Thought of God, representing the *sefirah* of *Hokhmah* (Wisdom), is where it all begins; and that the Voice (*Kol*) of God as the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* (Splendour, Majesty) governs the emanatory process, this *sefirah* being the central support upon which the other *sefirot* rest. The *Zohar* also says that just as human thought gives rise to understanding which is then expressed by the voice in words, so too does the Thought (*Hokhmah*) of God give rise to the *sefirah* of *Binah* (Understanding). *Binah* then expresses itself as the Voice (*Kol*). This Voice then gives rise to the Word, from which all other parts of the creation, symbolized as the many human words, are created.<sup>2</sup> In this instance, the Voice gives rise to the Word, while in the *Zohar's* previous description, it is the Word which gives rise to the Voice. Essentially, Word and Voice are being used for the creative Power, expressed at different levels of creation.

In biblical literature, when the Lord summons His prophets or otherwise expresses His will to them, the text often speaks of their hearing the “Voice of the Lord” or the “Word of the Lord”. In many instances, this may be only a figure of speech. In other cases, the creative Power of God is more definitely implied. In *Genesis*, for example, when Adam and Eve have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they hear the Voice of God in the garden and hide themselves. The “garden” symbolizes the heavenly realms of creation and, by eating of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve – symbolizing the soul and the mind – begin their descent into the physical world. They thereby hide themselves increasingly from God's “Voice” and presence.

Again, the Israelites' experience of God's presence on Mount Sinai is told in *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy* in terms of smoke, light, fire and the Voice of God. Understood mystically, this experience is an inner vision

or spiritual experience. The Voice is the spiritual Sound – the divine creative power, often described as the awesome Word or Voice of God:

And Mount Sinai was altogether in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount trembled greatly. And when the voice (*Kol*) of the *shofar* sounded long, and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him with a Voice (*Kol*). And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount; and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

*Exodus 19:18–20, JCL*

Did ever people hear the Voice (*Kol*) of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? ... From heaven He made you hear His Voice (*Kol*), that He might instruct you; and upon earth He showed you His great fire; and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire.

*Deuteronomy 4:33–36, JCL*

Commenting on the Israelites' experience of the Voice of God at the revelation of the *Torah*, the *Zohar* says that the Voice is the same as the divine Name, and is the root or source of all creation. It is the expression of the creative Power:

The *Torah* emerged from that inner Voice (*Kol*), called Great Voice (*Kol*), of which we read: "These words the Lord spake, etc., with a great Voice (*Kol*), and it went on no more."<sup>3</sup> Observe that that Great Voice (*Kol*) is the root of all things and is the essence of the Holy Divine Name.

*Zohar 2:226b, ZSS4 p.274*

Much later, the prophet Elijah describes his experience of God as a "still small Voice" which the *Zohar* describes as the "very innermost Point, which is the Source of all illumination":<sup>4</sup>

And he said, "Go out, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small Voice (*Kol*).

*1 Kings 19:11–12, JCL*

The biblical psalms contain many references to the Voice of God. Psalm twenty-nine describes the powerful character of God's Voice in symbolic terms, likening it to the powerful forces of nature, held in awe by people of all times:

Ascribe to the Lord, O you mighty,  
 give to the Lord glory and strength.  
 Give to the Lord the glory due to His Name,  
 worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.  
 The Voice (*Kol*) of the Lord is upon the waters,  
 the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon many waters.  
 The Voice (*Kol*) of the Lord is powerful,  
 the Voice (*Kol*) of the Lord is full of majesty.  
 The Voice (*Kol*) of the Lord breaks the cedars,  
 the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.  
 He makes them skip like a calf,  
 Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox.  
 The Voice (*Kol*) of the Lord divides the flames of fire.  
 The Voice (*Kol*) of the Lord shakes the wilderness,  
 the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.  
 The Voice (*Kol*) of the Lord makes the hinds to calve,  
 and strips the forests bare,  
 and in His temple every one speaks of His glory.  
 The Lord sits enthroned at the flood,  
 and the Lord sits enthroned as King for ever.  
 The Lord will give strength to His people,  
 the Lord will bless His people with peace.

*Psalm 29:1–11, JCL*

In the *Zohar*, Rabbi Eleazar interprets this imagery in terms of the *sefirot* – the different spiritual emanations or “waters” which form creation:

Rabbi Eleazar came forward first and expounded the verse: “The Voice (*Kol*) of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth, even the Lord upon many waters.”<sup>5</sup> He said: “‘The Voice (*Kol*) of the Lord’ is the supernal Voice (*Kol*) presiding over the waters, which flow from grade to grade until they are all collected in one place and form one gathering. It is this Voice (*Kol*) which sends them forth each in its course, like a gardener who conducts water through various channels to the requisite spots. ‘The God of glory thundereth’: this is the side that issues from (the *sefirah* of) *Gevurah* (Might), as it is written, ‘Who can understand the thunder of his mighty deeds (*gevurotov*)?’<sup>6</sup> ‘The Lord upon many waters’: this is the supernal Wisdom, which is

called *Yod*, and which is ‘upon the many waters’, the secret source that issues therefrom.”

*Zohar 1:31a, JCL*

See also: **Āvāz, Voice.**

1. *Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 17:1.*
2. *Zohar 1:246b; cf. WZJ p.326, ZSS2 p.382.*
3. *Deuteronomy 5:22.*
4. *Zohar 1:209a, ZSS2 p.291, JCL.*
5. *Psalms 29:3.*
6. *Job 26:14.*

**Kun** (A/P) *Lit.* Be! Exist! The divine Command by which creation comes into being or existence; His Word or Order. *Kun* is used in the *Qur’ān* to denote *Allāh*’s creative force and order, as in the expression “*Kun! Fa-yakūn*”:

When He decrees a matter,  
He says to it “Be (*Kun*)!” –  
And it is (*Fa-yakūn*).  
*Qur’ān 2:117; cf. AYA*

It is He who gives life and death;  
And when He decides upon an affair,  
He says to it, “Be (*Kun*)!” –  
And it is (*Fa-yakūn*).  
*Qur’ān 40:68, AYA*

The term also appears in the expression, “*Kun bi-ism Allāh!*” – “In the name of God: Be!” From the content of the *Qur’ān*, it is clear that Muḥammad was well versed in the Bible, and this particular expression must have originated with the creation story at the beginning of *Genesis*:

And God said, “Let there be light!”:  
and there was light.  
*Genesis 1:3, KJV*

The words “God said” are then repeated as a refrain for everything that God creates. This creation story is also echoed in the *Psalms*:

By the Word of *Yahweh* the heavens were made,  
their whole array by the Breath of His Mouth; ...

He spoke, and it was created;  
He commanded, and there it stood.

*Psalm 33:6, 9, JB*

Mystically, *Kun* refers to the Word that creates and sustains the creation. It is identical in meaning with *Kalām Allāh* (Speech of God), *Āvāz-i Khudā* (Voice of God), or *al-Ism al-A‘ẓam* (the Greatest Name). Rūmī makes it clear that this “*Kun*” of God’s is not a word that can be written in any alphabet. It comes from the realm of Unity:

Know that the world of unification lies beyond sense:  
if you seek Unity, march in that direction.  
The divine Command, “*Kun* (Be)!” was a single act:  
The (two letters) N (*nūn*) and K (*kāf*) occurred only in speech,  
but the Essence remained pure.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3099–100; cf. MJR2 p.169*

Although *Kun*, in Arabic, consists of two letters, yet the Reality or “Essence” to which it points is one, and its effect – the creation of the universe – is also one.

Similarly, the Indian mystic, Tulsī Sāhib, who wrote many poems in the form of dialogues with a Muslim seeker, Shaykh Taqī, says that *Kun* is one with God; it is His Creative Word:

This is Tulsī’s call: heed it, O practitioner,  
and act on it.  
The *Kun* of the *Qur’ān*  
leads on to *Allāhu akbar* (*Allāh* the great).

*Tulsī Sāhib, in Santon kī Bānī, Ghazal v.9, SKB p.304*

See also: **al-Amr, Command, al-Ḥukm, Tà Mīng.**

**kūshṭā** (Md) *Lit.* truth, troth, right, sincerity; also as First Truth,<sup>1</sup> Word of Truth,<sup>2</sup> the Name of Truth,<sup>3</sup> the Seal of Truth;<sup>4</sup> a Mandaean term for the divine Truth or Reality, especially as the creative Power; also, a pact, an oath, particularly the Mandaean ritual handshake, linked with a kiss, in which the hand is given to another to signify the bond of good faith and sincerity between members of the Mandaean brotherhood.

*Kūshṭā* is not the divine Essence itself, the “First Life”, yet – like the *Logos* of John’s gospel<sup>5</sup> – it existed “in the beginning”:

You are enduring, First Life, before whom no being had existence,  
 unearthly One from worlds of light,  
 Supreme Being who is above all works,  
 above the ancient Radiance and above the First Light –  
 Above the life which emanated from Life,  
 and above the Truth (*Kūshṭā*) which was of old in the beginning!

*Mandaean Prayer Book 43; cf. CPM p.40*

*Kūshṭā* takes an active part in the life of all creatures, being portrayed as a divine “Ferryman” and “Messenger”:

*Kūshṭā* transports his good Plant,  
 which he transplanted into the ages and worlds;  
 For he is a Ray from the great brilliancy of Life,  
 (one) who stands and gives instruction.  
 In every aspect, he is a Ferryman who ferries over souls,  
 and steers them into the sublime Spirit....  
 All fruits, vegetation, fish, birds and animals are joined with him,  
 just as spirit is joined with soul.

*Thousand and Twelve Questions I:276; cf. TTQ p.187*

And:

You say that *Kūshṭā* is coming here,  
 that a Messenger from Life is on his way here.  
 A Messenger is on his way here,  
 distributing the bounty of the Mighty (Life).  
 And the chosen righteous rise into the joy of Life,  
 and behold the place of light.

*Thousand and Twelve Questions II:130; cf. TTQ p.236*

One Mandaean text identifies *Kūshṭā* with the “white *Pihtha*”, the Bread of Life, observing that “*Kūshṭā* refreshes his devotees.”<sup>6</sup> *Kūshṭā* is also said to remove the sins of those who love him, as easily as water “falls upon the earth”:

As water when poured out falls upon the earth, ...  
 so shall their sins, trespasses, follies,  
 stumblings and mistakes be loosed  
 from those who love the Name of Truth (*Kūshṭā*).

*Mandaean Prayer Book 33; cf. CPM p.33*

*Kūshṭā* also appears in the common Mandaean refrain, “May *Kūshṭā* strengthen you!”<sup>7</sup>

See also: **Truth** (2.2).

1. *Mandaean Prayer Book* 15, *CPM* p.11.
2. *Mandaean Prayer Book* 18, *CPM* p.13.
3. *Mandaean Prayer Book* 33, 57, 61, 75, 76, *CPM* pp.33, 50, 51, 75, 82.
4. *Mandaean Prayer Book* 74, *CPM* pp.63, 65.
5. *John* 1:1–2.
6. *Thousand and Twelve Questions* I:275; cf. *TTQ* p.187.
7. e.g. *Mandaean Prayer Book* 104, 178, 179, *CPM* pp.102, 160, 161; *Thousand and Twelve Questions* I:86, 99, 114, etc., *TTQ* pp.134, 136, 140.

**lab** (P) *Lit.* lips. In the poetic imagery of the Sufis, the ‘lips’ of the divine Beloved are associated with the divine creative power, also called the *Kalām Allāh* (Speech of God) and the *Nafas al-Raḥmān* (Breath of the Merciful). Just as speech and breath proceed from the lips, so the creative Power comes from the ‘lips’ of God. Maghribī writes:

Your lips (*lab*) blew upon a world  
cold and without life –  
A Breath from which it forthwith sprang to life.

*Maghribī, in FNII p.85; cf. in SSEI p.115*

Because intellectual knowledge and wisdom cannot locate the source from which life comes into the universe, ‘Aṭṭār was prompted to write:

In describing her lips (*lab*),  
knowledge is ignorance;  
In portraying her face,  
wisdom is insane.

*‘Aṭṭār, in FNII p.85*

But it is the ‘lips’ of God that mobilize the lovers of God. Hence, Sanā’ī says:

The souls of all the lovers  
are mobilized before Your lips (*lab*);  
With You, they are all and everything:  
devoid of Your lips (*lab*), they are nothing.

*Sanā’ī, in FNII p.85; cf. in SSEI p.115*



To experience the divine creative power is said to be a sweet pleasure so perfect that all attachments to the world automatically fade away. Thus, the ‘lips’ from which that ‘Speech’ or that ‘Breath’ proceed are often called, in Sufi poetry, sugary lips (*lab-i shakarīn*) or sweet lips (*lab-i shīrīn*). Similarly, references to the Beloved’s mouth (*dahān*), His sugary mouth or His sweet mouth, are associated with the inner, divine creative Power. Sanā’ī says that those “sweet lips” hold the Water of Life:

The Water of Life  
 lies in your sweet lips (*lab-i shīrīn*);  
 How can I live  
 without your sweet lips (*lab-i shīrīn*)?  
*Sanā’ī, in FNII p.86, in SSEI p.117*

See also: **dahān, Mouth of God.**

**Law, Law of Life** A law is a binding force or condition of rule. Probably originating from the Hebrew *Torah*, terms translatable as Law are used mystically in Greek, Coptic, Aramaic, Syriac, Parthian and other Middle Eastern languages in reference to the Creative Word of God. Similar terms such as the Covenant, the Commandment, the Command, Statutes and the Counsel of Truth are also commonly encountered in translations.

It is probable that the term *Torah*, generally understood in modern times to mean the entire body of Jewish religious Law and teachings, was used by Moses and the prophets of those times to mean the Creative Word. Later mystics, realizing this, demonstrated its real meaning by using the term and others like it in specifically mystic contexts. In fact, a number of scholars, as well as mystics, have pointed out that in many biblical instances, what is meant by the *Torah* is clearly referring to something mystical – the Word or Wisdom.

Linking the *Torah* and the Name of God with this mystic Voice or Word, the Jewish author of the medieval *Zohar* writes:

The *Torah* emerged from that inner Voice (*Kol*), called Great Voice (*Kol*), of which we read: “These words the Lord spake, etc., with a great Voice (*Kol*), and it went on no more.”<sup>1</sup> Observe that that Great Voice (*Kol*) is the root of all things, and is the essence of the Holy Divine Name.

*Zohar 2:226b, ZSS4 p.274*

Mystics from quite different cultures have used terms similar in meaning to *Torah* to refer to His Will, His Command or His Law as yet another term

for the divine creative power. Long before Judaism existed, for example, Zarathushtra used the Avestan term, *Ashā*; while in later times Muslim and Indian mystics have used the Arabic term, *Ḥukm*. Genuinely obeying *that* Law necessarily means being in inward mystical communion with it.

This becomes clear in one of the psalms, since no set of religious rules, statutes or commandments – however pure and ethical they may be – can of themselves “delight” the soul (as the psalmist says), for the soul is an inherently mystical entity, beyond all outward observances. Nor does following some set of outward rules result in the “rescue” or salvation of the soul, or endow a soul with “perception” or spiritual enlightenment. Nor are such observances particularly helpful in getting through the vicissitudes of human life. Yet all these fruits are claimed by the psalmist, referring to himself as a “lost sheep” and a “servant” of the Lord:

*Yahweh*, may my cry approach Your presence,  
 let Your Word endow me with perception!  
 May my entreaty reach Your presence,  
 rescue me as You have promised.

May my lips proclaim Your praise,  
 since You teach me Your statutes.  
 May my tongue recite Your promise,  
 since all Your commandments are righteous.  
 May Your Hand be there to help me,  
 since I have chosen Your precepts.

I long for You, *Yahweh*, my Saviour,  
 Your Law is my delight.  
 Long may my soul live to praise You,  
 long be Your rulings my help!  
 I am wandering like a lost sheep:  
 come and look for Your servant.  
 No, I have never forgotten Your commandments.

*Psalm 119:169–176, JB*

The same idea is found in the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*. Speaking of man’s particular potential, the author says of God:

He set knowledge before them,  
 he endowed them with the Law of Life.  
 He established an eternal Covenant with them,  
 and revealed His judgments to them.

Their eyes saw His glorious majesty,  
and their ears heard the glory of His Voice.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 17:11–13, JB*

Here, the “Law of Life” with which man – not just the children of Israel – is “endowed” is something within man himself, not an external set of rules. It is something which enables man to see “His glorious majesty” and hear the “glory of His Voice”.

The term is also encountered in various forms in the Manichaean Chinese manuscripts from Chinese Turkestan, characterized by their use of terminology from a number of religious traditions. Here, the unknown devotee prays to “Jesus Buddha” for liberation from birth and death by means of the “great Law”, the “right Law” or the “pure Law”:

Send down the springtide of the great Law  
to prosper the ground of my (true) nature (my soul)....  
Compel the sun of the great Law to shine universally,  
and make my heart and nature (soul) always bright and pure....  
Pray dispel my morbidity and dullness of many *kalpas* (ages)....  
grant the Medicine of the great Law  
to heal and restore me quickly.

*Manichaean Hymns, LSMH p.178:31–33*

And:

Free my feet,  
which have been fettered for many years,  
to enable them to walk on the road of the right Law....  
I will arrive soon in the peaceful and happy country.

*Manichaean Hymns; cf. LSMH p.181:60*

Again, also requesting that his “light-eyes” (inner eyes) be opened to see this great “Law-Nature” or “Law-Body”, the devotee prays:

I wish only that you will stretch out  
your great compassionate hands,  
and caress my body with ... the pure Law,  
to remove and clear all fetters of past *kalpas*,  
cleansing away from my hair and body  
the dust and dirt of past *kalpas*....

Open my light-eyes of the Law-Nature,  
so that they may see the ... (great Law-)Body

without hindrance,  
and I am thereby spared ... intense hardship.

*Manichaean Hymns; cf. LSMH pp.180–81:55–56*

The “intense hardship” which the soul is spared is that of continuous reincarnation and transmigration. Similarly, this time praying to Jesus to release all souls from the “sea of birth and death”,<sup>2</sup> he says:

Never again cut them off from the stream of the right Law;  
Never again throw them into the devils’ mouths.

*Manichaean Hymns, LSMH p.180:53*

And speaking of the Saviour as the King of the *Nous*, the disciple says that he has opened his inner vision, enabling him to actually see this “wonderful Law-Body”:

By him have now been opened my *Buddha*-natured eyes,  
and thus they can see the ... wonderful Law-Body.

*Manichaean Hymns, LSMH p.176:10*

See also: **Command, Commandment, al-Ḥukm, Torah.**

1. *Deuteronomy* 5:22.
2. *Manichaean Hymns, LSMH p.180:52.*

**Letter** A written communication; a Middle Eastern metaphor used for the Word of God; usually as a part of an allegory in which the soul – lost or asleep in the physical universe – is sent a message or ‘letter’ from the divine Source. There are a number of variations of this allegory, the most extensive of which is found in the *Acts of Thomas* in a long poem known as the *Robe of Glory* or the *Hymn of the Pearl*. Here, the soul, portrayed as a prince of royal parentage, is sent to Egypt (symbolizing the material world) to bring back the pearl (of true spirituality). The “letter” appears at a point in the story where the soul has fallen fast asleep in Egypt, and has forgotten its quest for the spiritual “pearl”. The divine parents, therefore, send a “letter” to their forgetful child:

And they wrote me a letter,  
and every noble signed his name thereto:  
“From your Father, the King of kings,  
and your Mother, the Mistress of the East,

and from your Brother, our next in rank,  
 to you our son, who is in Egypt, greeting!  
 Up and arise from your sleep,  
 and listen to the words of our letter!  
 Call to mind that you are a son of kings!  
 See the slavery – and whom you serve!  
 Remember the pearl  
 for which you were sent to Egypt!  
 Think of your bright robe,  
 and remember your glorious toga,  
 which you shall put on as your adornment.  
 Your name is named in the Book of Life,  
 and with your Brother, whom you have received,  
 you shall return to our kingdom.”

And my letter was a letter  
 which the King had sealed with his right hand,  
 (to keep it) from the wicked ones, the children of Babel,  
 and from the tyrannous demons of Sarbug.

It flew in the likeness of an eagle,  
 the king of all the birds;  
 It flew and alighted beside me,  
 and became all-speech.

At its voice and the sound of its rustling,  
 I started and arose from my sleep.  
 I took it up and kissed it,  
 and loosed its seal, and read.  
 And according to what was traced on my heart  
 were the words of my letter written.

*Robe of Glory 40–55, Acts of Thomas IX; cf. AAA pp.241–42, ANT p.413, HS pp.18–21*

The soul now awakens and sets out on the spiritual journey. And on the threshold of the inner realms, the soul meets the spiritual form of the “Brother” or Master, and hears the “voice” of the “letter” – the divine Music:

And my letter, my awakener,  
 I found before me on the road,  
 and as with its voice it had awakened me,  
 so with its light was it leading me,  
 shining before me in a garment of radiance,  
 glistening like royal silk.

And with its voice and its guidance,  
 it also encouraged me to speed,  
 and with its love was drawing me on.

*Robe of Glory* 64–68, *Acts of Thomas IX*; cf. AAA p.242, ANT pp.413–14, HS pp.22–25

There are a number of references to the various elements of this poem in the literature of the period, both before and after the time of its writing. So although the *Robe of Glory* must have been one of the most complete renderings of the allegory, it is clear that its essential elements were not original. In addition to the “robe” or garment of the soul, which is one of the commonest metaphors in all branches of the mystic literature of those times, there are also a number of references to the mystic “Letter” as the Word of God. It appears, for instance, in an allegorical poem from the very early Christian *Odes of Solomon*. Writing of the creative Power, the poet says:

And His Thought was like a Letter:  
 His Will descended from on high.  
 And it was sent like an arrow from a bow,  
 shot forcefully.

*Odes of Solomon* 23:5–6

The ‘Thought’ or primary Emanation (the Word) of the Lord is likened to a letter, sent from on high like an “arrow from a bow, shot forcefully”. It is also compared to “His Will descended from on high”, because it is by this Power or force that everything in the creation is manifested. The ode continues with the imagery of a Letter, concluding with:

For the Letter was a great Volume,  
 written wholly by the Finger of God.  
 And the name of the Father was upon it,  
 and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
 to reign for ever and ever.

*Odes of Solomon* 23:21–22

The Letter is described as a “great Volume”, since everything in the creation is ‘written’ within this ‘book’ – everything is created and continuously manifested by the Word. The letter is also ‘signed’ by the “Father”, “the Son” and the “Holy Spirit”. That is, the letter carries the stamp and authority of God, the Saviour or Master, and the “Holy Spirit” or Word. The Holy Spirit and the Master are one with God: three-in-One and One-in-three. And it will always be this way, says the writer: they will “reign for ever and ever”. This is the continuous story of creation.

The Mandaean also appear to have been familiar with this metaphor. It is found, for example, in an allegory where the soul, personified as Adam, is rescued from the material world by *Mahzian*-the-Word, one of a number of mythical Mandaean Saviours. On receipt of the mystic “Letter”, the soul – personified as Adam – smells its fragrance, sneezes and then prays (meditates). In Semitic folklore, sneezing is symbolic of awakening, since only a person who is awake will sneeze:

Then a Voice came from above,  
 at which he fell upon his face,  
 and was powerless to rise,  
 and stayed fallen on his face  
 until *Ayar-Dakia* (Pure Spirit) came –  
 And in his right hand he was carrying a Letter.

Then Adam took the Letter into his right hand,  
 smelt at it, sneezed, prayed,  
 and praised the King who is all light, and said:  
 “I beseech You for lofty strength like Your own.”

Then a Voice came to him from above,  
 and it sent *Mahzian*-the-Word.  
 In his hand, he was carrying a Letter,  
 and he came towards him (Adam),  
 and gave the Letter into Adam’s right hand.  
 And Adam kissed it three hundred and sixty times,  
 then opened it, but understood not what was in it.  
 So he concentrated his thought,  
 and prostrated himself before *Mahzian*-the-Word,  
 and thereafter arose.  
 Then he (*Mahzian*) instructed him in the ABG (*equiv.* ABC),  
 and, little by little, he comprehended all *Nāṣīrūtha* (Truth).

*Alma Rishaia Rba* 99–135; cf. *SA* p.26, *PNC* pp.6–7

In another Mandaean allegory, the poet describes the “fastening” or seal of the mystic letter as being made of “Water” – a reference to the Living Water:

A letter, communication and purity  
 came to me from the house of Life.  
 Its fastening is (Living) Water,  
 its wreath is light,  
 its weapon the Living Word,  
 and its seal the Chosen, Pure One (the Saviour).

Every man who opens it and reads therein shall live,  
 shall be whole, and his name will be established  
 in the house of Life.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 63; cf. CPM p.52*

See also: **pearl**.

**Life Force** The power or vital energy within which gives life; essentially, the creative Power of God, whether or not it is recognized as such.

**Life Stream** The stream of life or energy that comes from the Divine, giving life and existence to the creation; also called the Audible Life Stream, a term used for the creative Power, and probably coined by the American surgeon, Dr Julian Johnson (*d.* 1939), in his book *The Path of the Masters*, indicating the fact that this great Power can be heard within oneself in mystic practice; stemming, by association, from the Indian term, *Shabd Dhār* (Sound Current). Dr Johnson writes:

It is not easy to explain exactly what the Audible Life Stream is. It cannot be defined or explained in words. This is so because it is beyond the capacity of any language, and it is also beyond the capacity of this writer. We have never known anyone who could put it into words, because language is limited. If we could summon all the languages ever spoken by man, extracting from them their utmost powers of expression, it were a vain effort even then to undertake to describe and explain this primary fact of nature. It is a story which is never told because it cannot be told. It is a language which has never been spoken or written. It is the ever living Melody which cannot be recorded on bars and spaces. Its notes are beyond the strings of any earthly instruments. Its inspiring chorus rings through every chamber of the soul, but there is no way to convey the idea to other people who have not heard it.

Its glorious light cannot be pictured on canvas. One sees its feeble reflections in the morning sky or that of the setting sun, or in the silvery moon. But its colours are quite beyond the comprehension of any mortal artist; while in its pure state, above the regions of matter, it simply blends into one infinite perfection which no man can describe, except to say with Swāmī Jī (Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh), "It is all love!" It is the *dhunātmak* Word of those regions where language is useless. It is the smile of the lover which finds its home in the heart, but cannot be expressed in words. When it is heard, the enchanted listener is silent, and filled with a great joy.



Stated in the simplest words we can employ, the Audible Life Stream is the supreme Creator Himself vibrating through space. It is the wave of spiritual life going forth from the Creator to every living thing in the universe. By that Current, He has created all things, and by it He sustains them. In it, they all live and move and have their being, and by that same Current, they will ultimately return to their source of being.

Try now to get a picture of that luminous reality, the grand orchestra of the universe. Its heavenly strains are not only filling all interstellar space, but they are ringing with far more enchanting Music through all the higher worlds beyond the utmost bounds of the physical. The higher we go, the more enchanting the Music. In those higher worlds the Music is less mixed with matter, and so it is not dulled. After passing the third region on the path of the Masters, this sublime chorus becomes so overwhelmingly attractive that the soul grows impatient to go on up. It is absorbed in it. It lives in it day and night. It is its life, its joy, its spiritual food. There is not a cubic millimetre of space in existence which is not filled with this Music. Sweeter and sweeter its heavenly strains vibrate through every living being, great or small, from world to world, and from universe to universe. Its life-giving melodies may not be consciously heard by those who are not trained to catch them, but there is not a living being in all creation which does not derive its life from this Current. All joy that has ever thrilled a living soul has come out of this divine harmonic. How great is this luminous reality!

If you still think much of the word religion, then you may say that this Current is the only real religion. Or better, it is the giver of all genuine religion. It is the one and only thing in the world which actually binds men back to God. That is the meaning of our word religion – something which binds the soul back to God. Without this Stream, nothing could live for a single moment or even exist. All life and all power come from it. From the crawling ant to the thunderbolt, from the tidal wave to the solar cycle, every manifestation of dynamic energy comes from this Stream. From the burning orbs of the Milky Way to the flicker of a candle, all take their light and energy from this grand central Power. The pull of gravity, the flash of lightning, the building of thought forms, and the love of the individual soul – all come from this Current primordial.

That which physical science calls energy, which in Sanskrit is called *prāṇa*, is only a manifestation of this Life Stream, ‘stepped down’ to meet material conditions. Like electricity in the air, it is omnipresent. It is also omnipotent. In it lies all energy, either latent or dynamic. It only awaits the proper conditions to express itself as

dynamic force in one form or another. It has many forms of expression, most of which are not yet known to physical science.

Of course, it has to be stepped down, and at each step down it takes a different character or quality to which we give names if we can demonstrate them at all. Science has not yet discovered most of them. But every force known, from primal energy called *prāṇa* down to electricity and magnetism, are all modified forms of the same eternal Current. Its stepping down is necessary to serve the common cosmic and human needs. But at last it is all one force. It is the supreme One, manifested and manifesting.

The tremendous heat, energy and light of our sun and of all suns are all derived from this Stream. Every ray of light in the universe is a phenomenon of this infinite stream of light. Upon its power hangs every star in its orbit. Not a single rose may bring forth its buds without this Power, and no little child smiles without manifesting this Power. If we speak of attributes, let us speak cautiously. Who can comprehend it or assign qualities? Who can analyse it? But we know from its manifestations that it has at least three very wonderful attributes:

love – wisdom – power.

And the greatest of these is love. It is believed by some to be quite true if we say that this self-luminous reality has but one attribute: love. And this would coincide perfectly with the teaching of Jesus when he said, “God is love.”<sup>1</sup> What more can be said? God is love and love is God. They are the same, and they are identical with this Life Stream. The theme is too deep for words. Language fails us. Thought itself is lost in a blaze of light! And that light is the Audible Life Stream, the one self-luminous reality! ...

We come back now to that particular phase of the Audible Life Stream which concerns us most – the fact that it can be heard. This is an amazing thing, marvellous to contemplate! This idea is so utterly new, to the Western world in particular. It amounts to the most important discovery of modern thought, and yet it is not a modern discovery. It is a fact of nature well known to Masters during the most remote ages. It is the loss of this important knowledge that has left most of the world in spiritual darkness. From age to age, the great Masters come to revive this knowledge, after materialism has obscured it.

As said before, it is not heard with the physical ear. But it can be heard, and everyone has the capacity. It only requires the development of an inner and finer organ of hearing, which every person

possesses. It is developed under the instructions of a living Master. This fact of hearing the Sound is our supreme joy, for it points directly to our ultimate spiritual freedom. The Masters teach their students exactly how to develop this inner hearing. After that, the Life Stream can be heard as distinctly and perfectly as we can hear anything on this plane by means of the physical ears.

If it be true that no man has ever seen God, it means that he has not seen Him with the physical eyes. Yet on the inner and higher planes of seeing and hearing, God may be both seen and heard. To accomplish this marvellous achievement, it is necessary to seek first a living Master and then place ourselves under his instructions. You must then succeed. God is seen and heard by all initiates of a living Master who devote themselves to the practice as given by the Master....

This creative Current, filling all space, may be likened to the electromagnetic waves of the radio. The receiving set is the human body, more accurately, the astral body within the physical. The receiving set standing on your table simply has to be tuned in in order to receive the music. Each individual man or woman is a receiving set. As soon as he is tuned in by the Master, he is ready to receive "the pure white Music" spoken of by Kabīr.<sup>2</sup> It then remains only to keep the instrument in proper order to go on enjoying this melodious *Bānī*. Of course, but few get the Music at once after their initiation. It takes a little time to develop the inner hearing. The entire body, and more particularly the mind and astral body, must be cleaned and purified and then attuned to the higher vibrations. After that, the Music comes clearly. When one begins to hear it, he is filled with a great joy; for there is nothing in the world to be compared with it.

The full chorus of a Handel, the sublimest strains of a Wagner, are all dull when compared with this *Bānī*. If we put into one composition all the values of a Bach and a Beethoven, let the harp and the violin, the pipe organ and the flute combine to interpret the music of all the masters of music, even then you could not produce one minor chord of this sublime enchantment. It takes possession of the soul of the hearer; it recreates him, and then he finds himself a citizen of a new world. The attractions of sense disappear. He is exalted. His heart is purified and his mind is renewed. He lives anew. He has become immortal. How can the shadow of death ever cross his path? He has definitely entered the stream of everlasting life!

When it is time for him to leave the body, he goes as one who throws off an old garment. Upon the divine wave, he ascends to the bosom of God. No sorrow of earth can ever again submerge him. He rises above all turbulent waves of passion, as a man mounts the sky in an aeroplane, while the floods of muddy water roll by beneath him.

He rises triumphantly above every evil. One can never again be unhappy after he has once participated in this life-giving Music. Long after the Melody itself is shut out by attention to things of this world, the joy of it goes on ringing through one's entire being. But the same ringing delight may be heard again any moment that the student wishes to listen to it. He has only to withdraw his attention from the outer world, and concentrate a little.

From the sacred hour when the student hears this Music, he is never again alone or lonely. He may wander far from home or friends, but he is never lonely. In a true sense, he enjoys the companionship of God Himself. The supreme One is always present with him, playing for his delight the grandest chorus of the universe! Its sweet tones are calling him, tenderly calling him back home. And he longs to be on the way.

*Julian Johnson, The Path of the Masters, POM pp.397–402*

See also: **Dhār, Shabd kī Dhār.**

1. Actually, St John, in *1 John* 4:8, 16, *KJV*.
2. Kabīr, *Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī* 7:3, *KSSI* p.59; cf. *KWGN* p.232.

**Living Air** Like Wind and Breath, Air and Living Air are terms for the Word commonly encountered in Manichaean writings. Since water brings life to the desert, fire brings essential heat and light to physical existence, bread maintains life in the body, and breath is required for the continuation of bodily existence, so the creative current of the Word became known as the Living Water, the Living Fire, the Bread of Life and the Breath of Life. God, too, being the source of life and consciousness, was called the Living God. It is by no means surprising therefore to find that the Word was also called the Living Air, or just the Air or the Wind. In one of the Manichaean psalms, the poet or the devotee asks, rhetorically:

How is the Living Air,  
the Breath of Life that surrounds the Father?  
The Great Spirit of the land of light,  
the [source] of all the *aeons* (inner realms and powers)?  
The land of light, the house of the Father,  
the bride chamber of all the *aeons*?  
Tell (me) the news.

*Psalms of Heracleidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB pp.198–99*

And later in the same psalm, the Call – the Voice or Word – responds:

I was sent, the Air rejoicing, being gathered,  
 surrounding the Father, that I might tell the news.  
 I was sent, the bride chamber rejoicing,  
 the land of light, the house of the Father.  
 Lo, this is the news of the skies.

*Psalms of Heracleidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.199*

Here, the “skies” are the inner heavens and the heights of God, while the “Air” is the Spirit, that which is of the Father’s essence.

Likewise, in a psalm of praise to the Saviour, the devotee alludes to the inner music of the “land of light” and the “Living Air”:

You make music to the land of light  
 and play the lute to the Living Air.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.168*

See also: **Breath of God, pneuma, wind.**

**Living Bread** See **Bread of Life.**

**Living Cry** See **Cry.**

**Living Seed** See **Seed.**

**Living Spring** See **Spring.**

**Living Tree** See **Tree of Life.**

**Living Voice** The divine Creative Word or Power; a variant of the Voice or the Voice of God, as in a Manichaean hymn where, as the *Srōshahrāy*, the Column of Glory, it is described as “this pure prayer, this Living Voice and divine Song”.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **Voice of God.**

1. *Manichaean Hymns, MBB p.18ff.; cf. ML p.65, GSR p.135:1.IV.6.*

**Living Water(s)** One of the oldest metaphors for God's creative Power, especially in the Middle East, where it is found in a number of languages; also called the Water of Life, the Water of Immortality and so on. As a part of mythology, the term was extant as long ago as early Mesopotamian times, three or four millennia BCE, where the Water of Life, together with the Plant or Bread of Life, is in the keeping of *Anu*, the father of the gods. In Sumerian art, they are symbolized by an overflowing vase, often held by a god, identified by many as *Enki*, lord of wisdom and saviour of mankind. In the legend of Inanna's descent to the underworld, where the goddess is killed and impaled upon a stake, it is the Water of Life and the Plant of Life sent by *Enki* which brings her back to life.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, in the *Myth of Adapa*, the Sumerian precursor to Adam, it is because Adapa refuses to drink the Water of Life and the Bread of Life provided by *Anu* that he and all mankind are cursed by *Anu* with disease and tribulation:

The Bread of Life they placed before him,  
but he did not eat.  
The Water of Life they placed before him,  
but he did not drink.

*Myth of Adapa* II:63–65, SVS p.194; cf. ABE p.98, KTL p.34, MRS p.181

In the Jewish scriptures, the earliest known use of this kind of metaphor is found in *Genesis* as the river which flows out of Eden – the divine eternity – to water the garden of creation. Metaphors likening the creative Power to water, streams, fountains, springs and so on are also common in the writings of the Jewish prophets and in the biblical Wisdom literature; they are encountered in the writings of the *Ebionim* (probably the Essenes) of Qumran, as discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls. They were used by Jesus, continued into the early Christian era, and were used by the gnostics, by the Mandaeans, and by Mānī and his successors. Later, the same metaphors reappear in the writings of the Sufis and Indian mystics. With the possible exception of the Tree of Life, the Word and perhaps the Name, there is no other mystic term which has had such a long history of use.

Probably for climatic reasons, as much as any other, the greatest archaeological evidence of early literacy and civilization has been discovered in the Middle East. Dry sand is a far better preserver of the past than damp earth. It is the Middle East, too, which has been the greatest source of early mystic teachings, especially those concerning the creative Power. Living Water, the Tree of Life and the Word have been used throughout the entire span of man's traceable, literate history in the Middle East – a period of about 6000 years.

For a largely dry and often desert area, the metaphor of Living Water is strikingly apt. To a fundamentally agrarian society, the presence of water is paramount. Without water, there is no physical life. Without the Living Water, there is no creation. Without conscious contact with the Living Water there is no salvation for a soul caught in the entanglements of physical existence.

When the soul awakens to the glories of its own true heritage, it perceives that the life-giving, healing and creative vibration of the Word underlies everything, that the Word is the fountain that gives life and ‘fertility’ to all levels of the Lord’s creation. It experiences, directly, that everything blossoms and comes into being due to the inward vibration and vitality of the Word. Ultimately, the soul realizes that there is nothing but this primal Word reverberating through all things.

In Hebrew, the term for Living Waters is *Mayyim Hayyim* or just *Mayyim* (Waters). Some later Jewish mystics have referred to it as the *shefa* (lit. abundance), referring to the ‘flow’ of the divine will or grace. In the Bible, the prophet Jeremiah describes the Lord as the “Fountain of Living Water”.<sup>2</sup> Zechariah speaks of the conquest of Israel by her enemies, and of her ultimate restitution on the “day” of the Lord, when the Lord will appear and the “Living Waters” will flow out of “Jerusalem”. Although the passage has been interpreted politically, it also has an allegorical meaning as the release of the soul from its captivity in this world, Jerusalem being a metaphor for the heavenly Jerusalem, the eternity of God. The “eastern sea” and the “western sea” are presumably the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean, respectively:

And it shall be on that day,  
     that Living Waters shall go out from Jerusalem:  
 Half of them towards the eastern sea,  
     and half of them towards the western sea:  
     in summer and in winter shall it be.  
 And the Lord shall be king over all the earth;  
 On that day the Lord shall be one, and His Name one.

*Zechariah 14:8–9, KB*

In the *Song of Songs*, written sometime between the first and third centuries BCE, taking Lebanon as a metaphor for the higher realms, the poet paints a graphic scene of the life and vitality brought into being by the flow of this divine creative Power:

Fountain that makes the gardens fertile,  
     well of Living Water,  
     streams flowing down from Lebanon.

*Song of Songs 4:15, JB*

Using a similar image, the well-known twenty-third psalm speaks of the “still waters” or the Waters of Stillness (*Mei Menuhot*), the stillness of meadows and lakes symbolizing a sublime level of inner peace that restores and renews the soul. This is again the Living Waters of the Word, while the “green pastures” are the inner realms or mansions of the soul. The psalmist is using a pastoral metaphor of the soul as a sheep and the Lord or Master as a shepherd. The imagery is not meant to be taken literally:

The Lord (*Yahweh*) is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
 He makes me to lie down in green pastures:  
 He leads me beside the still waters.  
 He restores my soul.

*Psalm 23:1–3, KB*

In the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*, the writer clearly equates Wisdom, the Bread of understanding and the Living Water, which he calls the “Water of Wisdom”. Speaking of the one who earnestly seeks Wisdom, he writes:

She (Wisdom) will give him the Bread of understanding to eat,  
 and the Water of Wisdom to drink.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 15:3, JB*

Some of the most fervent mystic writings from the immediately pre-Christian era are found in the psalms among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Here, too, the writer demonstrates his familiarity with this and other Middle Eastern mystic metaphors:

I thank Thee, O Lord,  
 for Thou hast placed me beside a Fountain of streams  
 in an arid land;  
 And close to a Spring of Waters  
 in a dry land;  
 And beside a watered garden  
 in a wilderness.

For Thou didst set a plantation  
 of cypress, pine and cedar for Thy Glory;  
 Trees of life beside a mysterious Fountain  
 hidden among the trees by the water;  
 And they put out a shoot of the everlasting Plant.

But before they did so, they took root,  
 and sent out their roots to the Watercourse;



That its stem might be open to the Living Waters,  
and be one with the everlasting Spring....

No man shall approach the Wellspring of Life  
or drink the Waters of Holiness  
with the everlasting Trees,  
or bear fruit with the Plant of Heaven,  
who seeing has not discerned,  
and considering has not believed in the Fountain of Life,  
who has turned his hand against the everlasting Bud.

*Thanksgiving Hymns XVI: 1–15 (18), CDSS pp.278–79*

The “dry land”, “arid land” or “wilderness” is this world. “No man shall approach the Wellspring of Life” without following the path of the “Fountain of Life”. This they do in company with the “everlasting Trees”, the “Trees of life” who have “sent out their roots to the Watercourse” and become “one with the everlasting Spring”. The “Trees of life” and the “everlasting Trees” are possibly a reference to the ‘divisions’ of the creative Power, sometimes called the Five Trees in gnostic literature.<sup>3</sup> The “everlasting Bud”, from which the “Plant of Heaven” grows is probably either the divine Source or the creative Power.

The best known example of this term in the Christian world is in John’s gospel. It appears in one of John’s allegorical stories where the events and the dialogue are almost certainly anecdotal, designed to convey a mystic meaning. According to the story, Jesus is left on his own at a well. Feeling thirsty, he asks a woman to draw him some water; she responds:

How is it that thou, being a Jew,  
askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?  
For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

*John 4:9, KJV*

But Jesus ignores the query and responds:

If thou knewest the gift of God,  
and who it is that saith to thee, “Give me to drink,”  
thou wouldest have asked of him,  
and he would have given thee Living Water.

*John 4:10, KJV*

This is the point that the gospel writer wants to make. The “gift of God” was a term commonly used for the gift of baptism into the Living Water. Hence, Jesus adds:

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again;  
 But whosoever drinketh of the Water  
     that I shall give him shall never thirst;  
 But the Water that I shall give him shall be in him  
     a Well of Water springing up into everlasting life.

*John 4:13–14, KJV*

Later on in John's gospel, Jesus again says:

If any man thirst, let him come unto me:  
     let him that believeth in me, drink.  
 As the scripture hath said,  
 "Out of his breast (from within himself)  
     shall flow rivers of Living Water."

*John 7:37–38; cf. JB, KJV, RSV*

Jesus says that if anyone is truly seeking God, is athirst with a true longing to really understand the mystic reality, he should go to one from whose "breast" flows an abundance of the Living Water, the 'milk' that nourishes the soul. He will be put into contact with the mystic River or Fountain of Living Water. As in much of John's gospel, the "me" that is speaking here is the *Logos*, the Word. Incidentally, the scriptural quotation ("Out of his breast ...") is not found anywhere as an exact quote, though there are a number of biblical passages which refer to fountains or rivers of Living Water.

The *Gospel of Thomas* adds to the meaning of John's gospel when Jesus speaks of the merging of the disciple and the Saviour on the inner planes, and the accompanying revelation of inner mysteries:

He who will drink from my mouth  
     will become like me.  
 I myself shall become he,  
     and the things that are hidden  
     will be revealed to him.

*Gospel of Thomas 50:108, NHS20 pp.90–91*

Water is commonly used in religious rituals to signify the cleansing of the soul. In many instances, however, people have come to believe that physical water itself provides such a cleansing. This is a literalization of a mystic truth. In a papyrus fragment found among the rubbish heaps of Oxyrhynchus, presumed to belong to an otherwise unknown gospel, Jesus is in conversation in the Temple precincts with a "Pharisaic chief priest". He and his

disciples have been accused of not performing the required ritual ablutions, but Jesus responds with some pithy observations concerning the futility of such rituals and the true nature of spiritual cleansing:

Woe unto you blind that see not!  
 You have bathed yourself in water that is poured out,  
     in which dogs and swine lie night and day;  
 And you have washed yourself,  
     and have chafed your outer skin,  
     which prostitutes also and flute girls  
     anoint, bathe, chafe and rouge,  
     in order to arouse desire in men,  
     but within are full of scorpions  
     and of [bad]ness [of every kind].

But I and my disciples, of whom you say have not washed,  
     have been washed in the Living Water  
     which comes down from [God out of heaven].

*Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840; cf. ANT pp.29–30, OG pp.53–54*

The incident, anecdotal or otherwise, is clearly intended to point out the difference between external washing and mystic ‘bathing’ in the Living Water. This is the only bathing that brings purity to the soul.

Living Water – as the Water of Life – is again encountered in the *Book of Revelation* where God reputedly says to the visionary:

I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.  
 I will give unto him that is athirst  
     of the Fountain of the Water of Life freely.  
 He that overcometh shall inherit all things,  
     and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

*Book of Revelation 21:6–7, KJV*

And again, where Jesus, echoing the words of John’s gospel, says:

Let him that is athirst come.  
 And whosoever will,  
     let him take the Water of Life freely.

*Book of Revelation 22:17, KJV*

The meaning is once again that of the life-giving Word, since there is no other source of life. Similarly, speaking of Jesus, an ‘angel’ says:

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,  
 and shall lead them unto Living Fountains of Waters:  
 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

*Book of Revelation 7:17, KJV*

Like many of the terms found in John's gospel, expressions such as Living Water and Water of Life are also common in Mandaean literature. In one poem, the writer speaks of the "Voice of the Living Water", going on to talk of the Saviour who made it possible to see the "Living Waters". He is

the Being who came and opened their eyes  
 to the Living Waters,  
 pouring them into their hearts,  
 bestowing wisdom and faith.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 370; cf. CPM p.260*

In another Mandaean poem, the devotee praises the Saviour in an extract where the healing Water of Life is also equated with the Medicine of Life, both being metaphors for the Word:

O Physician, whose medicine is Water,  
 come, be a Physician to your devotees! ...  
 On him whom you have healed, do you,  
 my lord, bestow soundness.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 71; cf. CPM pp.59–60, MEM p.162*

And in a song of praise to the Saviour as the "Water of Life", it is made clear that this "Water" flows out of eternity, the "house of Life" itself:

Water of Life (*Mia Hiia*) are you!  
 You are come from the Place which is life-giving,  
 and are poured forth from the house of Life.

At your coming, Water of Life (*Mia Hiia*), from the house of Life,  
 the good come and refresh themselves,  
 but the wicked are discomfited.

And the children of this world are abashed and say,  
 "Is there not room for us in the place of light?  
 For those that seek of it, find,  
 and those who speak of it are heard."

*Mandaean Prayer Book 33; cf. CPM p.33*

Water as a metaphor for the creative Power is also common in other gnostic texts. Emphasizing the equivalence of Water with the Word, the writer of *Concept of Our Great Power* addresses the soul:

You are sleeping, dreaming dreams.  
Wake up and return (to God),  
taste and eat the true food!  
Hand out the Word and the Water of Life!  
Cease from the evil lusts and desires.

*Concept of Our Great Power 39–40, NHS11 pp.302–5*

It is evident that as terms for the divine creative power, Living Water and its variants have had a long history. In fact, their usage can be traced into later Sufi and Indian mystical expression where they are used in the same way.

See also: **Āb-i Ḥayāt, River, Stream, Tree of Life, Waters.**

1. *Inanna's Descent* II:65–67, 244–45, *SLW* pp.297, 307, 301, 310, *SMS* pp.90, 94.
2. *Jeremiah* 2:13, 17:3.
3. *Gospel of Thomas* 36:19, *NHS20* pp.60–61; *Second Book of Jeu* 119:50, *BC* pp.166–67.

**Living Wine** A variant of the True Vine and wine as a metaphor for the Word of God and the spiritual intoxication of contact with it. Manichaean writings provide a rich source of this imagery, where the True Vine, wine, Living Wine, Wisdom, the Word of God and many other metaphors are mixed and intertwined in a flow of generous lyricism:

Jesus, my true guard, may you guard me;  
First-born of the Father of the Lights, may you guard me.  
You are the Living Wine, the child of the True Vine,  
give us to drink a Living Wine from your Vine....

Who will not rejoice when the sun is about to rise on him?  
You are a perfect day, being like your Father in heaven.  
You invite us: you have broached for us a new wine.  
They that drink your wine, their hearts rejoice in it.  
They are drunk with your love,  
and gladness is spread over their [hearts].

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.151*

In another of these psalms, the psalmist refers to Jesus by alluding to his parables and other examples. Jesus is the “True Vine”, the “Living Wine”, the “Branch of the Tree”, the “Bridegroom”, the “Shepherd” and so on:

The Son of the Living God, the Physician of souls –  
 come sing to him, the Saviour of spirits;  
 The Father who is in the Son, the Son who is in the Father...  
 The straight Way that leads in to Life;  
 The perfect Day of Light, that of the sun that does not set;  
 The holy Bread of Life that is come from the heavens;  
 The sweet Spring of Water that leaps unto Life;  
 The True Vine, that of the Living Wine;  
 The joyous Branch of the Tree, that is laden with fruit;  
 The new Plant of God, that of the Fruits of Life;  
 The joyous Bridegroom of his church;  
 The Shepherd of the sheep that wanders  
 in the desert of this world.

*Psalms of Heraclidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB pp.193–94*

See also: **Eucharist** (►2), **True Vine**.

**Logos** (Gk) *Lit.* reason, intellect, calculation, intelligence, word, speech, discourse; mystically, the Creative Word; an ancient term used originally by Greek mystics, and later by many others in Mediterranean countries and the Middle East; commonly translated as Word, Reason, Intelligence or Intellect, since it is by this Power that all the creation is ordered and organized, expressing the supreme intelligence and wisdom of God.

The term is used extensively in gnostic texts. It is a standard aspect of the gnostic myth that the *Logos* or *Sophia* (Wisdom) descends into this world and – as the individual soul – falls into a state of misery and spiritual ignorance. A Saviour – a personification of the *Logos* – is therefore sent to rescue the soul. Some of the gnostic systems add complex ramifications to the story, but the essence is always the same.

In the Christian world, the term is best known from the opening lines of John’s gospel:

In the beginning was the Word (*Logos*),  
 and the Word (*Logos*) was with God,  
 and the Word (*Logos*) was God.  
 The same was in the beginning with God.  
 All things were made by it (the *Logos*),

and without it (the *Logos*)  
was not any thing made that was made.

*John 1:1–3; cf. KJV, TYN*

Used in this sense, *Logos* is similar to the Indian *Shabd*, *Vāk* or *Bānī*, which have the same mundane meaning of ‘sound’, ‘word’ or ‘discourse’, but have also been used by mystics and philosophers to describe the Audible Life Stream, the inner Sound Current or divine Power that directs and sustains the creation, both within and without.

The term has a long history in Greek mystical literature. It was used by Heraclitus (c.535–475 BCE), 500 years before Jesus:

Of this *Logos* which always exists, men are without understanding,  
both before they have heard it and after having heard it for the first  
time. For though everything comes into being according to this  
*Logos*, men seem to have no experience of it.

*Heraclitus, Fragment 1; cf. PAC2*

The early Christian father, Clement of Alexandria, quotes a fragment of uncertain antiquity, attributed to the legendary Orpheus in which the *Logos* is understood as a practical path to the Divine:

Looking to the divine Word (*Logos*), apply yourself to it,  
concentrating your heart and mind (*nous*);  
And walk well in the straight path,  
and to the immortal King of the universe alone direct your gaze.

*Orphic Text, in Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Heathen*

*VII:15–17, P8 col. 181; cf. WCA1 p.74*

Plato (c.427–347 BCE) uses the term in a number of places. In the *Republic*, Socratēs says:

The man whose mind (*dianoia*) is truly fixed on eternal realities ...  
fixes his gaze upon the things of the eternal and unchanging order,  
and seeing that they neither wrong nor are wronged by one another,  
but all are arranged according to the *Logos*, he tries to imitate them,  
and to make himself like them as much as possible.

*Plato, Republic 6:500c*

Likewise, Plotinus (c.205–270 CE), writing two centuries after Jesus, says:

The *Logos* is the beginning and the *Logos* is everything,  
and everything is generated by it.

*Plotinus, Enneads 3:2.15*

Though references to the *Logos* can be found throughout Greek philosophy, translations are often obscure or ignore its mystical sense. To understand how this has happened, it is helpful to know something of the history of modern classical scholarship. Classical Greek civilization, which produced a number of mystical philosophers and teachers like Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Socratēs, Philo Judaeus, Plotinus and others, existed in a society that had significant interaction with Middle Eastern cultures such as Egypt and Persia. Heraclitus, in fact, lived in Ephesus, in the Greek-dominated part of the Asia Minor coast, now Turkey. Philo Judaeus – the well-known Hellenistic Jew, mystically minded philosopher and prolific commentator on the Jewish scriptures – lived in Alexandria, Egypt, the intellectual centre of the ancient world, home to the largest library in the classical world.

By the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE, the great library in Alexandria had been destroyed and classical manuscripts could only be found in ecclesiastical libraries. The combination of feudalism and the Church domination of society brought the so-called Dark Ages to Europe, a time when learning and philosophical discourse were largely forbidden and were rigidly controlled. During the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, Europe also engaged in protracted warfare against the Islamic world, including the Crusades and the defence of Spain. By the time of the Renaissance revival of classical texts, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Europe and the Middle East no longer shared a common culture, as they had done during the classical era, but were instead antagonists.

Generally speaking, Renaissance scholars emphasized rationality and material science, and had little understanding of Middle Eastern mystical traditions. Renaissance classical scholars thus ‘rediscovered’ Greek philosophy without understanding its original context. These scholars were, as a rule, rationalists. It was this rationalist, scientific attitude which produced the great technological and social advances of the Western world. But when they set out to translate ancient philosophy, and were faced with the elusive word, *Logos*, which is its cornerstone, they naturally assigned to it the meaning that was the cornerstone of their own world-view: reason. Moreover, the Greek philosophers’ mode of expression lent itself readily to this interpretation because the ancient Greeks had laid great store by reason, logic and lucid thinking. Modern classical scholarship builds upon this Renaissance foundation, and many of the anti-mystical, ultrarational biases remain.

This is nowhere more significant than in scholarly interpretations of the word *Logos*. ‘*Logos*’ does have an ordinary, mundane meaning as reason, intellect and so on. It is in this sense that it appears in many Greek words that have come into English, as in:



<i>Meaning of Logos</i>	<i>plus a Greek compound</i>		<i>yields the English:</i>
speech, word, story	<i>dia</i>	(by means of)	dialogue
	<i>eu</i>	(well, good)	eulogy
	<i>pro</i>	(before)	prologue
	<i>theos</i>	(god)	theology
theory, science	<i>gē</i>	(earth)	geology
calculation, proportion	<i>arithmos</i>	(number)	logarithm
reason, argument	<i>ana</i>	(according to)	analogue, analogy
logic	<i>syl</i>	(together)	syllogism

Relating to this mundane meaning, most scholars translate *Logos* as ‘Reason’, as in the introduction to a well-known collection of Plato’s works:

Many strands are interwoven in the dialogues, but always at the centre as their meaning is the Greek insight that Reason, the *Logos*, is nature steering all things from within.

*H. Cairns, Collected Dialogues of Plato, CDP p.xiii*

Yet although the *Logos* may be presented in scholarly translations as the purest aspect of ‘ideal’ Reason, it is rarely perceived as something mystical:

Plato was a philosopher and a poet, but not a mystic ... the beliefs of mystics are not products of critical examination and logical clarification; they are, on the contrary, a series of apprehensions, flashes, based on feeling, denying the rational order.

*H. Cairns, Collected Dialogues of Plato, CDP p.xv*

This bias against mysticism pervades most scholarly translations of Plato and the Greek philosophers. Consequently, there is a failure to recognize the rational and disciplined mental approach underlying the many spiritual practices which have come into existence with the express intention of making mystic experience reliable and repeatable. By discounting mysticism, translators impose a modern cultural context on ancient texts. This can have profound implications for the translations, changing the fundamental meaning of significant passages, and contributing to the overall impression that Greek philosophers like Socratēs were highly intellectual and argumentative, while at the same time diminishing their mystical and transcendental aspects.

For example, a verb derived from *Logos* is *logizomai*. Like *Logos*, it also has several meanings, including to count, to calculate, to reckon, to reason, to infer and so on. It is most often translated by modern scholars as ‘to

reason'. But in certain crucial passages none of these meanings are adequate. The meaning of the verb, of course, hinges on the meaning of the noun, *Logos*. If *Logos* is understood as 'reason', then the verb can be translated as 'to reason'. But if *Logos* is taken in its esoteric, mystic sense as a divine, omnipresent, sustaining power, then the verb *logizomai* can be translated as 'to give attention to the *Logos*', or listening to the divine Word within. Similarly, the noun *logismos*, derived from the verb, can mean 'meditation', not in the sense of thinking or considering something, but of spiritual practice. For example, in *Phaedo*, Socratēs says:

She (the soul) will calm passion by listening to the *Logos* within (by *logismos*, by 'reasoning' or meditation) and by always being in it, and by beholding what is true and divine and not the object of opinion. And being nurtured by it, the soul will seek to live in this way for as long as she lives, so that, when she dies, she will enter That which is kindred and similar to her own nature, and be freed from human ills.

*Plato, Phaedo 84a–b; cf. DPI p.439, PAC2 p.63, PEA pp.290–93*

Most scholarly translators, themselves predisposed to intellect and rationalism, take *logismos* as 'reasoning' and thus render the first line as, "by following Reason"<sup>1</sup> or "by following reasoning".<sup>2</sup> Thus, the misunderstanding and mistranslation of a single word changes the meaning of the passage from mystical to intellectual. The potential for misunderstanding is conveyed even more clearly in a fragment from the fifth-century (BCE) comic playwright, Epicharmus:

The *Logos* steers men and preserves them in the right way. Man has the power of reasoning (*logismos*), but there is also the divine *Logos*. The *Logos* is implanted in man to furnish life and sustenance.

*Epicharmus, Fragment 57; cf. HPW p.23, WCA2 p.289*

Epicharmus is contrasting human reason with the divine Reason (*Logos*). *Logismos* means both reasoning in a cogitative sense and also meditation in a contemplative or mystical sense. But the human capacity for both reason and mystical meditation arise from man's special relationship with the *Logos* and his potential for contacting it.

Understanding the *Logos* as the cosmic Word, the creative Power, the philosophers explain that it can be experienced through internal meditation as sound and light. There is no doubt that the ancient Greeks understood the *Logos* in this way. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, for instance, Socratēs – who has been pointing out that written words are of an inferior nature, because they are very easily misunderstood – goes on to say:

SOCRATĒS: Now tell me, is there another sort of Word (*Logos*), that is brother to the written word (*logos*), but genuine? Can we see how it originates, and how much better and more powerful it is than the other?

PHAEDRUS: What sort do you have in mind, and how is it generated?

SOCRATĒS: The sort that exists together with Knowledge, and is written in the soul of the student, that has the power to defend itself, and knows to whom it should speak and to whom it should remain silent.

PHAEDRUS: You mean the Word of Knowing, alive and ensouled, of which the written word may correctly be called an image.

SOCRATĒS: Precisely.

*Plato, Phaedrus 276a–b; cf. DP3 pp.185–86, PEA pp.566–67*

The passage is generally translated to mean that words and meaning in the mind are superior to written words, but Plato could just as easily have been referring to the divine *Logos*. Perhaps he was intentionally covering both meanings. It depends entirely on how the passage is translated.

Much has also been written regarding Socratēs' method of dialectic (Gk. *dialektikē*, lit. the art of dialogue), normally considered to be intellectual investigation through dialogue and questions. But again, it is found that *Logos* is at the root of this word (*dia* + *logos* = dialogue = 'by means of *Logos*'). In fact, in modern Greece, the term used for spiritual meditation is *dialogismos*. In a conversation with Glaucon, Socratēs hints that the conversational process of dialogue is a prelude to direct experience of the musical, inner *Logos*, which is the real dialectic:

"Do we not know that all these studies (*i.e.* mathematics and numbers, geometry, astronomy and harmonics) are but a prelude to that Song which we must learn? For surely you don't think that those who are clever in these matters are (true) dialecticians?"

"No, by *Zeus*," he said, "Except a very few whom I have met." ...

"This, then, Glaucon," I said, "Is the Song which dialectic penetrates. Though it belongs to the spiritual realm (*noēton*), the power of sight would be imitating It when we described it (in the story of the Cave) as attempting to look at living things themselves and the stars themselves and finally at the very sun. In the same way, whenever anyone tries by dialectic – apart from all the sense perceptions, but by means of the *Logos* – to find each of the things that are, and does not desist until he apprehends by spirit (*noēsis*) itself what Good is, he arrives at the limit of the spiritual realm (*noēton*), just as that other person reached the limit of the visible realm (*horaton*)."

"By all means," he said.

“Well then, do you not call this journey dialectic (*lit.* by means of *Logos*)?”

“Surely,” he said.

*Plato, Republic 7:531d–533a*

There is also a long passage in the *Enneads* of the Neo-Platonist, Plotinus (c.205–270 CE), where it is clear that for Plotinus dialectic is something vastly more than simply reasoning.<sup>3</sup>

There are a great many places in Greek literature from pre- and post-Christian times, where the *Logos* is described as a specifically mystic power. Although the works of Heraclitus, for example, are known only from fragments preserved in the writings of others, it is clear that he refers to it again and again:

We should let ourselves be guided by what is common to all (universal). Yet although the *Logos* is common to all (universal), most men live as if each of them had a private intelligence (life) of his own.

*Heraclitus, Fragment 2, HPW p.19*

Here, Heraclitus is employing the Greek love of wordplay. The Greek word for “common” also means ‘with mind (*nous*)’, the term *Nous* also being a term frequently used for the *Logos* as God’s universal or “common” Intelligence within all things. In other places, he says:

Although intimately connected with the *Logos*,  
men keep setting themselves against it.

*Heraclitus, Fragment 64, HPW p.68*

And:

From beginning to end, they (men) live together with the *Logos*.  
Yet they inhabit wholly separate places.  
They are separated from it,  
and so the things which they encounter daily  
seem strange to them.

*Heraclitus, Fragment 72*

And again:

Listening not to me but to the *Logos*,  
it is wise to acknowledge that all things are one.

*Heraclitus, Fragment 118, HPW p.102*

Sextus Empiricus (*d.c.*200 CE), writing seven centuries later, clearly understands Heraclitus in a mystical manner:

According to Heraclitus, it is by in-breathing the divine *Logos* that we become spiritual (*noētos*).

*Sextus Empiricus, Against the Logicians I:129; cf. HPW p.69*

Whatever interpretation scholars may give to Plato's understanding of the *Logos*, it is generally accept that Heraclitus speaks of it as divine. There is certainly no doubt that the *Logos* was understood in ancient times to be a mystical and spiritual reality. Belief in the existence of a spiritual dimension to creation, which man may contact through the *Logos*, is attributed by the early Church father, Hippolytus (*fl.*210–236 CE), to Pythagoras (*b.c.*580 BCE):

There are ... according to Pythagoras, two worlds: one spiritual, which has the *Monad* (the One) for an originating principle; and the other sensible....

Wherefore, the universe being divided ... into the spiritual and sensible worlds, we are also endowed with the *Logos* which comes from the spiritual (world), in order that by this *Logos*, we may behold the reality of things that are perceived by the spirit and are incorporeal and divine.

But we have, he says (as human beings), five senses – smelling, seeing, hearing, taste and touch. Now by these we arrive at a knowledge of (those) things that are discerned by sense....

The sensible (he says) is divided from the spiritual world.... Nothing ... of the spiritual can be known to us from (physical) sense. For, he says, neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor any whatsoever of the other senses known that (which is perceived by the soul).

*Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies VI:19; cf. RAH p.218*

Many others expressed the same point of view. Sextus the Pythagorean echoes the words of John's gospel:

The *Logos*, which is in you,  
is the light of your life.

*Sentences of Sextus, ILP p.194*

Philo Judaeus, the first-century Jewish philosopher, frequently speaks of the *Logos* in his writings. According to him, it is the dynamic, ever active Power of God, responsible for the order and organization in all things:

The discernible order in all things is nothing else but the *Logos* of God, perpetually engaged in the action of creation.

*Philo Judaeus, On the World's Creation 6; cf. PCW1 pp.20–21, TGH1 p.235*

Again, referring to the Greek system of the four principle ‘elements’ or conditions of matter, he also asserts that God has created everything; and the means by which He has done so is the *Logos*:

We shall find that the cause of it (the universe) is God, by whom it came into existence. The matter of it is the four elements, out of which it has been composed. The instrument by means of which it has been built is the *Logos* of God.

*Philo Judaeus, On the Cherubim 35; cf. PCW2 pp.82–83, TGH1 p.235*

After God, Philo says, the *Logos* is the most “primally existent” of all things:

But the most primally existent is God, and next to Him, the *Logos* of God.

*Philo Judaeus, Allegorical Interpretation II:21; cf. PCW1 pp.278–79, TGH1 p.230*

The *Logos* is also an essential feature of the early-second- or third-century Hermetic writings (in Greek):

The Word (*Logos*) of the Creator, O son, transcends all sight; he is self-moved; he cannot be increased, nor diminished. He is alone, and can be compared only to himself, equal, identical, perfect in his stability, perfect in order; for that he is the One, after the God alone beyond all knowing.

*Hermetic Fragment 15, in Cyril of Alexandria, Against Julianus I:33, P76 cols. 551–52d; cf. in TGH3 p.256*

Christian theology was largely built upon Greek mysticism, tailored to Christian needs and dogma. The doctrine of the *Logos* was well known in the philosophy and mysticism of those times, so it is no surprise to find it used in a Christian context. Although such theology often became intellectual and divorced from its origins, the early Christian fathers who introduced it, as well as some of the later Christian mystics, had a definitely mystical understanding of the *Logos*. Hence, the mid-second-century Justin Martyr equates the *Logos* with various other mystical terms from Jewish and Christian sources which were commonly used for the divine creative power:

I am now going to give you, my friends, another testimony from the scriptures that God before all His other creatures begat as the

Beginning, a certain spiritual Power proceeding from Himself, which is called by the Holy Spirit, sometimes the Glory of the Lord, and sometimes Son, and sometimes Wisdom, and sometimes Angel, and sometimes God, and sometimes Lord and *Logos*, and on another occasion he calls himself Captain, when he appeared in human form to Joshua the son of Nun....

The Word of Wisdom, who is himself this god begotten of the Father of all things, and Word, and Wisdom, and Power, and the Glory of the Begetter, will bear evidence to me, when he speaks by Solomon, the following....

*Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 61; cf. OPJG pp.20–21, WJMA p.170*

He then goes on to quote a passage from *Proverbs* concerning Wisdom as the first creation of God, and the dynamic Power underlying all creation.<sup>4</sup>

The doctrine of Christ as the incarnation of the *Logos* became a cardinal principle of Christian theology, appearing repeatedly in the writings of later Christian mystics and theologians. Thus, in a text attributed in the *Philokalia* to Antony the Great (c.251–356), generally regarded as the father of the Christian monastic movement, the “*Logos*” is described as the omnipresent originator and controller of material form, and is also equated with the divine “Image, Intelligence, Wisdom and Providence”:

God’s Providence controls the universe. It is present everywhere. Providence is the sovereign *Logos* of God, imprinting form on the unformed materiality of the world, making and fashioning all things. Matter could not have acquired an articulated structure were it not for the directing power of the *Logos*, who is the Image, Intelligence, Wisdom and Providence of God.

*Antony the Great, On the Character of Men 156, in The Philokalia; cf. PCT1 p.353*

Likewise, the seventh-century monk, Maximos the Confessor (c.580–662), another of the major contributors to the *Philokalia*, writes:

Not only is the divine *Logos* prior to the genesis of created beings, but there neither was, nor is, nor will be a principle superior to the *Logos*. The *Logos* is not without intelligence or bereft of life; he possesses intelligence and life because the Father is the essentially subsistent intelligence that begets him, and the Holy Spirit is his essentially subsistent and coexistent life.... The Father is unoriginate Intelligence, the unique essential Begetter of the unique *Logos*, also unoriginate, and the fount of the unique everlasting life, the Holy Spirit.

*Maximos the Confessor, Various Texts 1:3–4, in The Philokalia; cf. PCT2 pp.164–65*

Maximos also adds that only by means of the *Logos* can imperfection be overcome:

What man without the divine *Logos* dwelling in the depths of his heart can overcome the invisible wiles of the dissembling demons? How can he on his own, keeping himself free of all concourse with them, found and build the temple of the Lord? ... For concourse with the demons brings about the decay and destruction of the whole building, and strips the grace of beauty from divine offerings.

*Maximos the Confessor, Various Texts 3:75, in The Philokalia, PCT2 pp.228–29*

As observed at the outset, however, it is from John's gospel, particularly its opening prologue, that most people of a Christian background are familiar with the term, where it is translated as the 'Word'. John's gospel is written by a consummate artist of both Greek wordplay and Jewish symbolism, and there are a number of places where *Logos* means both the creative Power of God as well as the words or teachings of Jesus. Speaking of the incarnation of the Word in human form, he writes:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, ...  
full of grace and truth.

*John 1:14, KJV*

And later, he has Jesus say:

The word (Word) which ye hear is not mine,  
but the Father's which sent me.

*John 14:24, KJV*

He means that the word or teachings of a Master as well as the Word itself both come from God. The Master has not invented either of them. Again, he says:

It is the Spirit that quickeneth:  
the flesh profiteth nothing;  
The words (Word) that I speak unto you,  
they are Spirit, and they are Life.

*John 6:63, KJV*

It is the Creative Word that is "Spirit" and "Life", for no human words can truly be described as "Spirit" and "Life". "It is the Spirit that quickeneth" – not the "flesh" or physical words. But the words or teachings of a Master



do convey the message of the Spirit and Life, and without that outer word, the inner Word cannot be contacted. Hence, both are required for a person to receive “Spirit” and “Life”. Along the same lines, in another passage, Jesus says:

Why do ye not understand my speech?  
Even because ye cannot hear my word (*Logos*, Word).  
*John 8:43, KJV*

And later in this same discourse, he adds:

He that is of God, heareth God’s words (Word):  
Ye therefore hear them not,  
because ye are not of God.  
*John 8:47, KJV*

The meaning is the same in both cases. Only a person who is a real seeker of God will understand a Master’s words and hear his mystic Word. One who cannot hear the Word cannot really understand a Master’s teachings. In John’s gospel, Jesus also refers to the Word as the Bread of Heaven, the Living Water, the True Vine and the Spirit. The *Logos* is the author’s prevailing theme, and a number of scholars have observed that this gospel is actually an extended discourse upon its opening passage. The character of the dialogues of Jesus with the Jews, his disciples and various other protagonists are also derived from the tradition of Platonic dialogue.

The path of the Word or *Logos*, then, is one of the most perennial aspects of mystic teachings. However, when a mystic dies, it becomes increasingly misunderstood. As the early Christian text, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, has Jesus say:

On account of those who pervert my words I have come down from heaven. I am the *Logos*; I became flesh, labouring and teaching that those who are called will be saved.

*Epistula Apostolorum 39, OG p.155*

See also: **Davar**, **dialectic** (►2), **Kalimah**, **logismos** (►2), **Memra**, **Nous**, **Word**.

1. Plato, *Phaedo* 84a, *PDS* p.143.
2. Plato, *Phaedo* 84a, *PPG* p.36.
3. Plotinus, *Enneads* 1:3.1–6, *PEC* pp.10–12.
4. *Proverbs* 8:21–36.

**mā'** (A) *Lit.* water; synonymous with the Persian, *āb*. In Sufi literature, water signifies the bounty of the Lord, the Reality for which the soul thirsts; specifically, the divine creative power, the essence of Life.

Alluding to the *Genesis* story ("and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," etc.<sup>1</sup>), the *Qur'ān* says that every living thing was made from the divine creative power:

We (*Allāh*) made from water (*al-mā'*) every living thing.

*Qur'ān* 21:30, AYA

See also: **āb**.

1. *Genesis* 1:2ff., *KJV*.

**Mā' al-ma'īn, al-** (A), **Mā'-i ma'īn** (P) *Lit.* the flowing (*ma'īn*) Water (*Mā'*); running Water, Living Water; flowing implies the free spirit, unconstrained by the trammels of material existence; also called *Āb-i ravān*; hence also, Water of the Spirit, Water of Life; the creative Power. The term appears in the *Qur'ān* as a metaphorical admonition to unbelievers:

Say: "See ye? –

If your stream be some morning lost (in the underground earth),  
who then can supply you with clear-flowing Water (*Mā' al-ma'īn*)?"

*Qur'ān* 67:30, AYA

Alluding to the verse, Rūmī gives a clearly mystical interpretation in a story of the soul's longing to contact this "running Water":

On the bank of the stream there was a high wall,  
and on the top of the wall a sorrowful thirsty man.

The wall hindered him from reaching the water:

he was in distress for the water, like a fish.

Suddenly, he threw a brick into the water:

the noise of the water came to his ear like spoken words.

Like words spoken by a sweet and delicious friend:

the noise of the water made him drunken like wine.

From the pleasure of hearing the noise of the water,

that sorely tried man began to hurl

and tear off bricks from that place.

The water was making a noise, that is to say:

“Hey, what is the advantage to you  
of hurling bricks at me?”

The thirsty man said, “O water, I have two advantages:  
I will no wise refrain from this work.

“The first advantage is hearing the noise of the water,  
which to thirsty men is melodious as a rebec.  
The noise thereof has become to me  
like the noise of the trumpet of *Isrāfīl* (on the Day of Judgment).  
By this sound, life has been restored to one dead;  
Or it is like the noise of thunder in days of spring –  
from it, the garden obtains so many lovely ornaments;  
Or like the days of alms to a poor man;  
Or like the message of deliverance to a prisoner.  
'Tis like the Breath of the Merciful which,  
without mouth, comes to Muḥammad from Yemen;  
Or 'tis like the scent of Aḥmad (Muḥammad), the Apostle,  
which intercedes on behalf of the sinner;  
Or like the scent of the beauteous, graceful Joseph,  
which strikes upon the soul of lean Jacob.

“The other advantage is that, with every brick  
I tear off this wall,  
I come nearer to running Water (*Mā'-i ma'īn*);  
Since by diminution of the bricks,  
the high wall becomes lower every time one is removed.  
The lowness of the wall  
becomes a means of access to the water;  
Separation from it is the remedy  
bringing about union with the water.”

The tearing away of the firmly joined bricks  
is like prostration in prayer:  
It is the cause of nearness to God, for God has said,  
‘And prostrate thyself and draw near (to Me).’

So long as this wall is high necked,  
it is an obstacle to this bowing of the head.  
'Tis impossible to perform the prostration  
on the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayāt*),  
until I gain deliverance from this earthly body.  
The more thirsty anyone on top of the wall is,  
the more quickly does he tear off the bricks and turfs.

The more any one is in love with the noise of the water,  
 the bigger clods does he tear away from the barrier.  
 He, at the noise of the water,  
 is filled with wine (ecstasy) up to the neck.  
 The stranger to love hears nothing  
 but the sound of the splash.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:1192–214; cf. MJR2 pp.282–83*

The “wall” represents all the hindrances of physical existence that prevent a soul from coming into contact with the “Water of Life”. These include the senses, the ego, pride, attachment to and identification with the body, and so on. Hence, the “thirsty man” – the soul in this world, deprived of spirituality – says, “’Tis impossible to perform the prostration on the Water of Life until I gain deliverance from this earthly body.” And again, “So long as this wall is high necked, it is an obstacle to this bowing of the head” in humility and interior, mystic prayer.

Throwing down the bricks one by one represents the practice of *dhikr* (repetition) and *murāqabah* (contemplation), the spiritual practices by which the spiritual seeker slowly breaks down the attachment to self and body.

The result of this exercise is “hearing the noise of the water” – the mystic sound of the Living Water, the creative Power, “which to thirsty men is melodious as a rebec”. The love of the thirsty man for the sound of the running, splashing water is his longing for direct experience of the “Water of Life”. It forces him to work ceaselessly to get closer to the “running Water”, the *Mā’i ma’īn*.

The likening of the “noise” or mystic sound of this water to the “Breath of the Merciful which, without mouth, comes to Muḥammad from Yemen” is possibly an allusion to ‘Uways al-Qaranī, a mystic who lived in Yemen. It is said that Muḥammad was aware of his saintly influence even though he lived far away. Alternatively, or perhaps in a dual meaning, Yemen is linked with the Arabic *yamīn*, meaning right, as opposed to left. In imagery common to many cultures, it is said that Muḥammad regarded the right side as spiritual, while the left related to the devil. Al-Bukhārī, the well-known ninth-century collector of Muḥammad’s sayings (*ḥadīth*), explains: “Yemen was so-called because it is situated to the right (*yamīn*) of the *Ka’bah*, and Shām was called so because it is situated to the left (*shimāl*) of the *Ka’bah*.”<sup>1</sup>

The reference to Jacob (the devotee) and the “scent of the beauteous, graceful Joseph (the Master)” is drawn from the legend that the blind and aged Jacob recovered his sight on receiving the scent of Joseph from the latter’s shirt. According to the legend, his sight had been lost through excessive weeping in separation from Joseph. This “scent ... which intercedes

on behalf of the sinner” is the mystic Fragrance of the divine Breath or creative Power of God which brings spiritual sight to those who have become spiritually blind due to separation from the Divine.

See also: **ravān** (5.1).

1. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 4:56.703, HSB.

**ma'amarot** (He/Am) (sg. He. *ma'amar*, Am. *memra*) *Lit.* utterances, words; synonymous with the Hebrew and Aramaic *imarot* (sg. *imra*). In biblical and other early Middle Eastern texts, words or utterances are sometimes a literal reference to written or spoken words. In other instances, however, the meaning is the mystic Word or primal Utterance of God, as His divine creative Power or Voice. In *Genesis*, the creation is described as God's ten utterances or pronouncements (“And God said, ‘Let there be light!’” and so on), spoken over a period of six days. Jewish mystics did not take this to mean that God literally spoke in words or language; rather they understood God's ‘utterances’ to be the expression of His will or creative Power.

Passages using such terms are generally ambiguous, and were perhaps intended to be so. One of the psalms says:

The words (*imarot*) of the Lord are pure words:  
Silver refined in a furnace upon the ground,  
purified seven times.

*Psalm 12:7, KB*

Understood literally, and within the context of the psalm, the “words of the Lord” refer to the words in the Bible. But mystically, the psalmist may be referring to the seven heavens, created as ‘utterances’ or manifestations of the one Creative Word. A Manichaean psalm echoes the same sentiment, with the same double meaning:

I listened to Your words, I walked in Your laws;  
I became a stranger in the world  
for Your name's sake, my God.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLI; cf. MPB p.60*

During the rabbinic period (200 BCE – 400 CE), the term was used for the first emanations of the divine will. There is a *mishnah* (rabbinic discussion and interpretation) in which the rabbis said that the world was created through ten divine *ma'amarot*. These utterances were generally based upon the first of the two *Genesis* accounts of creation in which God makes ten

utterances. A text from the rabbinic period, *Midrash Rabbah*, shows that there was some discussion over which were the ten original utterances:

By ten commands was the world created, and these are they:

“In the beginning, God created.”  
 And the Spirit (*Ruah*) of God hovered.  
 And God said: “Let there be light!”  
 And God said: “Let there be a firmament!”  
 And God said: “Let the waters be gathered together!”  
 And God said: “Let the earth put forth grass!”  
 And God said: “Let there be lights!”  
 And God said: “Let the waters swarm!”  
 And God said: “Let the earth bring forth!”  
 And God said: “Let us make man!”<sup>1</sup>

Menaḥem ben Rabbi Yosi excluded, “And the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters,” and included, “and the Lord God said: ‘it is not good that the man should be alone.’”<sup>2</sup>

Rabbi Jacob ben Rabbi Kirshai said: “A separate command was devoted to the wind.”

*Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 17:1, JCL*

In another *midrash*, the ten *ma’amarot* are identified with qualities or aspects of God, as given in *1 Chronicles*:<sup>3</sup>

Rabbi Zutra bar Tobiah said in the name of Rav: “By ten qualities was the world created: wisdom, understanding, reason, strength, rebuke, power, righteousness, justice, lovingkindness and compassion.”

*Babylonian Talmud, Hagigah 12a; cf. in MTJM p.74, BLBR p.7:11*

The rabbis believed that the attributes or qualities of God were his ‘instruments’ or ‘utterances’ in the act of creation. As an early Kabbalist, Rabbi Judah ben Barzillai, wrote:

The world and all the creatures were created by means of the ten *ma’amarot*, and they are (immanent) in everything like the juice in the bundle of grapes, and they are the ten *sefirot* (emanations) linked to each other.

*Rabbi Judah ben Barzillai, in KNP p.145*

In later Jewish mystical texts, the *ma’amarot* (utterances) of God are given the same mystical interpretation as the vehicle through which the creation

took place. Some interpreted the six days in which the creation took place as representing six vessels. Each vessel has its own *ma'amar* (utterance, sound), which it transmits or contains.

See also: **Memra, Utterance, Word.**

1. *Genesis* 1:1–3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26.
2. *Genesis* 2:8.
3. *1 Chronicles* 29:11–12.

**ma'ayan** (He) *Lit.* fountain, well, source.

See **Fountains.**

**Ma'ayanei ha-Yeshua'** (He) *Lit.* Fountains or Wells (*Ma'ayanei*) of Salvation (*ha-Yeshua'*).

See **Fountains.**

**Ma'ayanei Mayyim Ḥayyim** (He) *Lit.* Fountains of (*Ma'ayanei*) Living Waters (*Mayyim Ḥayyim*).

See **Fountains.**

**mahā Nād** (H/Pu) *Lit.* great (*mahā*) Sound (*Nād*); highest or supreme Sound; the primal Word (*Shabd*).

See **Nāda.**

**Maḥshavah** (He) *Lit.* Thought; an alternative name, used in the *Zohar*, for the second *sefirah* (emanation) of *Ḥokhmah* (Wisdom); the first emanation of the divine will or Word in the process of creation. The *Zohar* explains:

Come and see. Thought (*Maḥshavah*) is the beginning of all; and in that it is thought (*maḥshavah*), it is internal, secret and unknowable. When this Thought (*Maḥshavah*) extended farther, it came to a place where Spirit (*Ruah*) dwelt. And when it reached this place it was called *Binah* (Understanding), and this is not so secret as the preceding, even though it is also secret.

This spirit (then) extended itself and brought forth a Voice.... This Voice comprised all the other powers. And this Voice governs Speech and produces a Word in its correct (true) form, since the Voice was sent forth from the place of the spirit....

And if you examine the levels, (you will see) that it is Thought (*Maḥshavah*), Understanding, Voice and Speech, and it is all one. And Thought (*Maḥshavah*) is the beginning of all, and there is no division. But it is all one, and all connected, for it is actual Thought (*Maḥshavah*) connected with *Ayin* (Nothing, *Keter*), and it is forever inseparable. And this is (the meaning of) “The Lord shall be one, and His Name one.”<sup>1</sup>

*Zohar 1:246b, WZL p.326*

However, Rabbi Isaac the Blind of Provence (c.1160–1235) used the term for the first and highest *sefirah* (the level of emanation beyond the will to even will the creation), which in the later Kabbalah became known as *Keter* (Crown).

See also: **sefirot** (4.1), **Thought**.

1. *Zechariah* 14:9.

**Maiden, Maiden of Light** Gnostic and Manichaean terms used for the Holy Spirit or Wisdom, as in the Manichaean psalm which says:

The Maiden of Light is the Holy Spirit.

*Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.116*

And also:

Lo, the Light of the Maiden  
has shone forth on me,  
the glorious likeness [of the Truth].

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXIV, MPB p.81*

See also: **Mother, Virginal Spirit**.

**mainyu** (Av) *Lit.* spirit; an Avestan word used extensively by Zarathushtra in his *Gāthās*. Perhaps derived from the root *man* (to think) common to both Sanskrit and Avestan, *mainyu* refers to something inside of man and not to any external power or spirit, as it came to be understood in later Zoroastrianism.



However, *mainyu* is also linked with the Sanskrit, *manyu*, meaning impetuous force, power, intensity, ardour or zeal. The word is often used in the context of the twin *mainyu*, the positive and negative powers (*Spentā Mainyu* and *Akō Mainyu*) in creation.

See also: **Akō Mainyu** (6.1), **Spentā Mainyu** (2.1).

**Mānā** (Md) See **Vohu Manō**.

**manna** (He. *mann*, *mun*) The food which the children of Israel ate, according to the *Exodus* story, during their forty years of wandering in the Sinai desert, on their way to the promised land:

And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness, there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, “It is *manna*”: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, “This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.”

*Exodus 16:14–15, KJV*

There has been considerable speculation on the nature of this *manna*, and the derivation of the word. Many have traced it to the similarly spelled Hebrew words for ‘what’ or ‘from where’. Thus, the Israelites called it, ‘What?’ or ‘What is it?’ Hence, the explanatory comment, “For they wist not what it was.” This seems to have been the traditional understanding of the term, for *manna* was similarly translated into Greek and Latin. Seneca, for example, called it by the Latin *quid*, meaning ‘what’.

The essential meaning, however, is almost certainly allegorical, and many have understood it thus. *Manna* is the spiritual food, the nourishment of the soul, the grace with which the Lord fed the Israelites (the souls of this world) during their spiritual journey from worldly narrowness, symbolized by their sojourn in Egypt (*lit.* ‘constricted’, in one Hebrew derivation), to the spiritual and eternal region, symbolized as the ‘promised land’.

The first-century Jew and biblical commentator, Philo Judaeus, equates *manna* with the Creative Word or Wisdom. He calls it the “heavenly food of the soul, Wisdom, which Moses calls *manna*”.<sup>1</sup> He also says:

*Manna* is the divine Word (*Logos*), eldest of all existences, which bears the most comprehensive name of ‘Some-what’.

*Philo Judaeus, Worse Attacks the Better 31, PCW2 pp.280–81*

Philo also makes a connection between the *Logos* as the “most all-embracing of created things” and the meaning of *manna* as ‘some-what’ or ‘something’. The term conveys the idea of the substance, the ground of being, that underlies everything – the ‘thing-ness’ or the ‘what-ness’ of everything. Philo equates this fundamental substrate of all things with the Word or *Logos*:

(God is) feeding us with His own most all-embracing Word (*Logos*): for *manna* means ‘some thing’, and this is the most all-embracing of all terms. And the Word (*Logos*) of God is above all the world, and is eldest and most all-embracing of created things.

*Philo Judaeus, Allegorical Interpretation III:61; cf. PCW1 pp.418–19*

Other derivations of the word have been suggested. Some relate *manna* to similar words in Arabic which mean the frost on a palm tree or the sap of the Tarfa tree. It could also be related to the Hebrew words for ‘portion’ or ‘inheritance’.

In Christianity, *manna* has likewise been equated with the divine *Logos*. Thus, the seventh-century monk, Maximos the Confessor (c.580–662), one of the major contributors to the *Philokalia* of the Orthodox Church, writes:

The *manna* which was given to Israel in the desert is the *Logos* of God. Those who eat it find that it supplies every spiritual delight. It is blended to suit every taste in accordance with the different desires of those who eat it, for it has the quality of every kind of spiritual food. Thus, to those who through the Spirit have been born from above by means of incorruptible Seed, it comes as pure spiritual milk.

*Maximos the Confessor, On Theology 1:100, in The Philokalia, PCT2 p.135*

The *rabbis* of the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* also speculated on the meaning of the term, taking it to mean the inner nourishment or grace with which God sustained the children of Israel during their time in the desert. In the *Talmud*, the *rabbis* say that *manna* is the pure and redemptive light of God. Mystically, this is the primal divine Light of the Godhead, which is projected into the creation as the Word, or Wisdom. As the *Zohar* explains:

Every day, Dew from the Holy Ancient One (*‘Atika Kadisha*, the Godhead) drops into the Lesser Countenance (*Ze’ir Anpin*, who represents the creation), and all the holy apple fields (inner heavens) are blessed. It also descends to those below, and it provides spiritual food for the holy angels, to each rank according to its capacity of perception.

It was this food of which the Israelites partook in the wilderness: “each of them ate the food of celestial princes”.<sup>2</sup> Said Rabbi Simeon:

“Even at this time there are those who partake of similar food, and that in a double measure. And who are they? Fellows of the mystic lore, who study the *Torah* day and night.”

*Zohar 2:61b, ZSS3 pp.191–92, JCL*

See also: **Bread from heaven, Yesh.**

1. Philo Judaeus, *Who is the Heir of Divine Things* 39, PCW4 pp.378–79.
2. *Psalm* 78:26.

**Manthrā** (Av) *Lit.* Word; also as *spentā Manthrā* (the holy Word); the holy Word of Zarathushtra’s *Gāthās*. Zarathushtra gives great importance in his teachings to the creative Power, which – among other names – he calls the *Manthrā*:

I will teach the highest truth of life,  
that which the all-wise *Mazdā Ahurā* revealed to me;  
Those of you who do not correctly practise  
this holy Word (*Manthrā*) –  
as I have experienced and now am teaching it –  
For them, the end of life is suffering.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 45:3; cf. DSZ p.540*

Here, *Mazdā Ahurā* and *Mazdā* are names for God. He says that only the devotee of this *Manthrā* will discover the secrets of God and find the mystic Truth:

Whosoever, O *Mazdā*, arises at the Voice of Your Word (*Manthrā*),  
he is a friend of that divine Truth (*Ashā*)  
to which Zarathushtra is devoted;  
May the Lord of Wisdom  
always guide him on the path of the Voice,  
so that my secrets may be revealed to him  
through Your Primal Mind (*Vohu Manō*).

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 50:6; cf. DSZ p.747*

This Word, he says, can be obtained by contact with a “Wise One” – a Master:

To him will come that which is the highest and the best,  
to whom my Wise One shall teach the truth  
of the Holy Word (*Manthrā*) which leads  
to perfection (*haurvatāt*), immortality (*amaretatāt*) and Truth (*Ashā*);

Such is the Might (*Xshathrā*) of *Mazdā*,  
 that within him will Your Primal Mind (*Vohu Manō*) increase.  
*Zarathushtra, Yasna 31:6; cf. DSZ p.190*

And:

Now indeed on Your behalf will I speak, O *Mazdā*,  
 for this should be revealed unto the wise:  
 A miserable fate awaits the followers of untruth (*dregvānts*),  
 and enlightenment for him who clings to Truth (*Ashā*);  
 Only he will surely be happy  
 to whom the Wise One reveals the holy Word (*Manthrā*).  
*Zarathushtra, Yasna 51:8; cf. DSZ p.784*

In another Zoroastrian treatise, most of which is now lost, it also says that this “holy Word” makes a person wise:

There are many wise sayings which the soul could not conceive,  
 nor the tongue express, without the holy Word.  
*Tahmuras Fragments 101–2, in GZ p.10*

See also: **Vohu Manō**, **Word**.

**mārgḥna** (Md) *Lit.* a staff; being upright and made of wood, the staff was used, particularly in Judaic writings, as a symbol for the Tree of Life, the Word, as in the twenty-third psalm, “Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” This Mandaean term for a staff is found in the allegory of the Fisher of souls, where the Chief Fisher (the Saviour) says that his staff is made of “pure Water”, an allusion to the Living Water of the Word:

The fisherman’s trident, which I have in my hand,  
 is instead a *mārgḥna* select, a staff of pure Water,  
 at whose sight the (other) fishers tremble.  
 I sit in a boat of glory,  
 and come into this world of the fleeting.  
*Mandaean John-Book, JMM p.144; cf. GJB p.72, JM p.145*

See also: **Fisher** (►2), **Staff** (►2).

**Medicine, Medicine(s) of Life** Metaphors for the Creative Word; part of a family of commonly used early Middle Eastern mystic metaphors centred on

the healing (by the spiritual Physician or Healer, *i.e.* the Master) of the soul's sickness or spiritual blindness caused by its being in this world, and responsible for its continued stay here. Aware of this imagery, the gnostic writer of the *Authoritative Teaching* uses the term as a simile:

Our soul indeed is ill because she dwells in a house of poverty (the body), while matter strikes blows at her eyes, wishing to make her blind. For this reason she pursues the Word (*Logos*), and applies it to her eyes as a medicine, opening them....

Thus the soul looks to the Word at all times, to apply it to her eyes as a medicine in order that she may see, and that her light may overcome the hostile forces that fight with her; and she may make them blind with her light, and enclose them in her presence, and make them fall down in sleeplessness, and she may act boldly with her strength and with her sceptre.

*Authoritative Teaching* 27–28; cf. *NHS11* pp.270–73

In a similar vein, in the *Acts of John*, speaking of the mystic path, John comments:

For as that is a vain medicine whereby the disease is not removed completely, so is it a vain teaching (path) by which the faults of souls and of conduct are not cured.

*Acts of John XIV*; cf. *ANT* p.257

Using the term specifically, the fourth-century Christian, Ephraim Syrus, speaks of Jesus as the Word, the “Medicine of Life”:

Glory to the Medicine of Life,  
that he was sufficient  
and cured the sickness of the souls  
through His doctrine (Word?).

*Ephraim Syrus, ESCN* p.55, *MEM* p.130

Using the same expression, a Manichaean psalmist requests the divine Physician:

O Physician who has the Medicines of Life:  
heal me of the grievous wound of lawlessness.

*Manichaean Psalm Book*; cf. *MPB* p.152

Here, “lawlessness” means living outside the divine Law or Word of God, of living in individuality or ego rather than in the will of the Supreme.

Taking the metaphor further, in another Manichaean psalm, the writer draws an analogy from ancient medical practice, saying that the divine Physician has two kinds of medicine, the “burning” and the “cool”. Here, the “*Nous* of Light” is the divine, creative Intelligence or Power:

The Physician of souls, he is the *Nous* of Light: ...  
 The burning medicines are the commandments.  
 But the cool medicines,  
     they are the forgiveness of sins:  
 He that would be healed,  
     lo, of two kinds are the Medicines of Life.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXXIX; cf. MPB p.40*

The “burning medicines” are the Physician’s instructions and his Law or Commandment (the Word). These eradicate sins and cleanse the soul by spiritual scrubbing. The “cool medicines” are the “forgiveness of sins”. This is the gift of the Physician to a soul, both medicines being required for emancipation. Hence, there is a Mandaean text addressed to the mythical Saviour, “my Lord, *Mandā-d-Hiia*, Lord of all healings”,<sup>1</sup> also praising him as:

You are the Medicine that cures pains,  
 the Healer who cures all who love His Name.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 179; cf. CPM p.162*

Universal panaceas for human ills, reversing old age and curing all diseases and so on, exist in the folklore and mythology of practically all cultures. These include the medicine of life, the water of life, the tree of life, wishing wells, wish-fulfilling trees, pearls, animals and so forth. Mystics have used such myths and metaphors to describe the creative Power because it completely solves all human problems by simply removing the soul altogether from the arena in which problems exist. There is no other solution quite so efficacious and permanent in its effect.

In Indian mythology, a universal remedy or panacea for all troubles is a *rasāyana* (lit. elixir), and *rasāyana śāstra* is the name of ancient alchemy, the teaching or science (*śāstra*) by which the elixir of life is made, and by which base metals are transformed into gold.

Just as the *rasāyana* is said to spread throughout the entire body, entering every pore and fibre, so too does the divine Word or Name permeate every part of man’s being, filling him with the elixir of the source of life itself. This is the best of all remedies. Thus, Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh writes:

There is no other remedy (*rasāyan*) like that of *Nām*. He who has prepared this remedy (*rasāyan*) has all other remedies (*rasāyans*) at his

disposal. When you have got hold of the husband, how can the wife go away?

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Prose 2:62; cf. SB p.66*

And Kabīr says:

Sleepiness is the sign of death.  
O Kabīr, awake and arise:  
Abandoning all other remedies (*rasāyan*),  
clinging to the remedy (*rasāyan*) of (the Lord's) Name.

*Kabīr, in Sant Bānī Sangrah 1, Nidrā 4, SBS1 p.55*

Other terms with similar meanings are also used in various languages. *Dārū*, a Punjabi word for medicine, remedy or antidote, is commonly used in rural areas, and appears in the *Ādi Granth*:

Ego is a chronic disease,  
but it has also its curing medicine (*dārū*, antidote).  
If the Lord bestows His grace,  
then man acts according to *Guru*'s instruction (*Shabd*, Word).

*Guru Angad, Ādi Granth 466, MMS*

Similarly, Sulṭān Bāhū, using the Arabic *dawā'*, writes:

The *Kalmah* (Word) cures the ailment of the mind –  
no other medicine (*dawā'*) works.  
The *Kalmah* removes all rust from the mind;  
The *Kalmah* washes all stains from the soul.

*Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 199, SBU p.368, SBE (198) pp.364–65*

Many mystics have said that meditation on the divine Sound is the remedy for all ills. But no medicine can be effective unless taken as prescribed. Likewise, initiation into the Word, unless supported by regular meditation, is of little value.

See also: **Physician** (►2).

1. *Mandaean Prayer Book 72, CPM p.61.*

**mekor Mayyim Ḥayyim** (He) *Lit. source (Mekor) of Living (Ḥayyim) Waters (Mayyim).*

See **Living Water**.

**Memra** (Am) *Lit.* Utterance, Word; the divine Creative Word or Holy Name; derived from the Hebrew, *ma'amar*.

In early Chaldaic and Aramaic translations of the Bible, such as the *Targums* (interpretive translations) of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzi'el (c.100–135 CE), *Memra* was used in place of the Hebrew name for God, *Yahweh*, since it was believed that the name *Yahweh* should not be spoken, nor God be conceived of in human terms. For example, according to the story of the Israelites in *Deuteronomy*:

Yet in this thing you did not believe the Lord (*Yahweh*) your God, who went in the way before you, to search out a place for you to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by which way you should go, and in a cloud by day.

*Deuteronomy 1:32–33, JCL*

The *Targum*, however, uses *Memra* in the first sentence instead of *Yahweh*: “... ye have not believed in the *Memra* of the Lord.” The *Encyclopedia Judaica* observes:

The *Memra* connotes the manifestation of God's Power in creating the world and in directing history. It acts as His messenger, and is generally analogous to the *Shekhinah* (divine presence) and the divine Wisdom.

*“Word”, in EJCD*

The use of *Memra* as a name of God illustrates that the spiritual Word or Name of God mentioned frequently in the Bible was equated with the Supreme Being. It also implies a belief that the creation took place through the activity of this original divine Word, Speech or Voice of God.

The term *Memra* also appears in rabbinic manuscripts in Aramaic, dating from the seventh and eighth centuries CE.

See also: **ma'amarot**, **Utterance**.

**milk, milk and honey** Metaphors or similes symbolic of comfort, plenty and sustenance; mystically, the sustenance of the spirit or divine Word, the inward flow of divine grace that sustains the soul.

The imagery stems from the well-known *Exodus* story in which – interpreted allegorically – the Saviour Moses leads the children of Israel (his chosen disciples) out of captivity in Egypt (the physical body), through the desert (the physical universe) to the promised land “where milk and honey flow” (eternity):



*Yahweh* said (to Moses), “I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow....

“And now the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me, and I have witnessed the way in which the Egyptians oppress them, so come, I send you to Pharaoh to bring the sons of Israel, my people, out of Egypt.”

*Exodus 3:7–10, JB*

The metaphors of milk and honey, either separately or together, appear in a number of places in the Bible. In the *Song of Songs*, for instance, the divine Beloved extols the beauty of the Lover (the soul):

Your lips, my promised one,  
distil wild honey.  
Honey and milk  
are under your tongue.

*Song of Songs 4:11, JB*

Similarly, speaking in poetic metaphors, the Beloved in his divine “garden” (in heaven) extends an invitation to his “friends” (all souls) to enter, to sit down at his table (in eternity), and to “eat” and “drink” with him, partaking of his “honeycomb”, “wine” and “milk” (the food and drink of the Spirit):

I come into my garden,  
my sister, my promised bride;  
I gather my myrrh and balsam,  
I eat my honey and my honeycomb,  
I drink my wine and my milk.  
Eat, friends, and drink,  
drink deep, my dearest friends.

*Song of Songs 5:1, JB*

Like many such metaphors, the same term could be given various shades of meaning, depending upon the context. In the case of ‘milk’, not only was it described as the ‘milk’ of the divine Mother, the Holy Spirit or Wisdom, but also of the Father. This usage occurs in several places in the ancient literature, as in the *Instructor* of the early Christian teacher, Clement of Alexandria (c.150–215 CE).

Clement was a man with considerable gnostic leanings, who must have studied widely among mystic literature in the international city of Alexandria

before his embrace of Christianity, and probably afterwards as well. He and Origen (who succeeded him as head of his school for Christians) are often credited with being among the early originators of Christian theology. In his *Instructor*, he embarks upon a long discussion on the nature of the milk upon which Christ's "babes" are nourished.

The need for such a discussion indicates that 'milk' was an image of significance in the Christian tradition despite its absence from the four gospels. Speaking of the spiritual "nourishment" of the divine Word, Clement says:

The nourishment (of the Word) is the milk of the Father, by which alone we babes are fed.... We, believing on God, flee to the Word, "the care-allaying breast" of the Father. And He alone, as is befitting, supplies us children with the milk of love, and only those are truly blessed who suck this breast....

To us infants, who drink the milk of the Word of the heavens, Christ himself is food. Hence, seeking is called sucking; for to those babes that seek the Word, the Father's breasts of love supply milk....

O mystic marvel! The universal Father is one, and one the universal Word; and the Holy Spirit is one and the same everywhere, and one is the only Virgin Mother.... Calling her children to her, she nurses them with holy milk, that is, with the Word.

*Clement of Alexandria, Instructor 1:6; cf. WCA1 pp.143–44, 142*

See also: **food and drink of the soul, honey, promised land** (2.1).

**Mind** Used variously by different writers, at different times. In modern times, it refers to the human mental 'apparatus', including thought, intellect, memory, emotion and so on. In mystic thought, this is really the individual mind which, using modern terminology, some mystics describe as a part of the universal mind or negative power.

In classical and early Middle Eastern times, however, various terms in different languages – all translatable as Mind – were used to mean the creative Intelligence of God, the divine creative power manifesting throughout creation. Using the Latin word *Mens*, the Roman poet Virgil (70–19 BCE) writes:

One life through all the immense creation runs,  
 one Spirit (*Spiritus*) is the moon's, the sea's, the sun's;  
 All forms in the air that fly, on the earth that creep,  
 and the unknown nameless monsters of the deep –

Each breathing thing obeys one Mind's (*Mens*) control,  
and in all substance is a single Soul.

*Virgil, Aeneid VI:724–29, VEGA p.582, in ECM p.173*

The Greeks used the word *Nous* (Mind or Intelligence), a term which was later employed by some of the gnostics, including Mānī and the Manichaeans. Zarathushtra used the term *Vohu Manō*, meaning Primal Mind, a term later found in the Parthian as *Vahman*, and used synonymously by Mānī with the Greek *Nous*. Later, among the Sufis, the *al-‘Aql al-Kullī*, often translated as Cosmic or Universal Intelligence or Mind, refers to the creative Power.

The terminology is perhaps confusing, since ‘mind’ used in the context of the universal mind or negative power is quite different from ‘Mind’ used for the primal creative emanation of God. The origin of ‘Mind’, meaning the creative Power, is by analogy with the human mind. Just as all human creative activity proceeds or emanates from mind or thought, so too can it be said that the creation is the expression or projection of the Mind of God, a creative force also called the Word or Wisdom of God, and so on.

The gnostics took the metaphor further, describing the Word as the *Ennoia*, *Epinoia*, *Pronoia* and so on. These are all terms derived from the same root as *Nous*, and translated as Thought, Primal Thought, the Idea, the First Idea and by other similar expressions.

See also: ‘*aql* (5.1), *al-‘Aql al-Awwal*, **mind** (5.1), **Nous**, **Thought**, **Vohu Manō**.

**Miriam's Well** An area of Lake Tiberias (also called the Sea of Galilee) where miraculous healings were said to have taken place; mystically, a symbolic reference to the inner fountain of divine grace and spirituality, the source of the Creative Word, said in Jewish legends to have been created by God on the ‘second day of creation’, after light.<sup>1</sup>

In *Exodus* and *Numbers*, Miriam is introduced as the sister of Moses (the prophet) and Aaron (the priest).<sup>2</sup> According to legend, she was the first in the line of Jewish prophets. Miriam's Well appears in extensions to the story of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the desert after their release from slavery in Egypt. The children of Israel are suffering from thirst, and lose faith that God will provide for them. But God has compassion, and sends Moses to strike a rock on Mount Horeb, from which water miraculously gushes. Drawing on various traditional sources, the legend continues:

The water that flowed for them on this spot served not only as a relief for their present need, but on this occasion there was revealed to

them a well of water, which did not abandon them in all their forty years' wandering, but accompanied them on all their marches. God wrought this great miracle for the merits of the prophetess Miriam, wherefore also it was called Miriam's Well. But this well dates back to the beginning of the world, for God created it on the second day of the creation....

This well was in the shape of a sieve-like rock, out of which water gushes forth as from a spout. It followed them on all their wanderings, up hill and down dale, and wherever they halted, it halted, too; and it settled opposite the tabernacle. Thereupon, the leaders of the twelve tribes would appear, each with his staff, and chant these words to the well, "Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it; nobles of the people digged it by the direction of the lawgiver with their staves." Then the water would gush forth from the depths of the well, and shoot up high as pillars, then discharge itself into great streams that were navigable, and on these rivers the Jews sailed to the ocean, and hauled all the treasures of the world therefrom.

The different parts of the camp were separated by these rivers, so that women, visiting each other, were obliged to make use of ships. Then the water discharged itself beyond the encampment, where it surrounded a great plain, in which grew every conceivable kind of plant and tree; and these trees, owing to the miraculous water, daily bore fresh fruits. This well brought fragrant herbs with it, so that the women had no need of perfumes on the march, for the herbs they gathered served this purpose. This well furthermore threw down soft, fragrant kinds of grass that served as pleasant couches for the poor, who had no pillows or bedclothes.

Upon the entrance to the Holy Land, this well disappeared and was hidden in a certain spot of the Sea of Tiberias. Standing upon Carmel, and looking over the sea, one can notice there a sieve-like rock, and that is the well of Miriam. Once upon a time, it happened that a leper bathed at this place of the Sea of Tiberias, and hardly had he come in contact with the waters of Miriam's Well when he was instantly healed.

*"Miriam's Well", from Midrashic Sources, in LB pp.369–71, LJCD*

Many elements of this story suggest a spiritual interpretation: the well moving with the people; its creation during the six days of creation; its unusual nurturing and healing powers. Metaphorically, the story means that Miriam's prophetic powers provided the spiritual 'waters' – the spiritual power or sustenance which the Israelites needed to survive.

The legend of Miriam's Well as an area in Lake Tiberias (Sea of Galilee) possessing special powers was prevalent in rabbinic times. The place appears

in a story concerning Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital and Rabbi Isaac Luria (“the Ari”), two mystics of sixteenth-century Safed:

When Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital first began to learn with the Ari, he could not grasp any of his teachings, and would forget everything that he would learn. Then one day the two took a small boat to Tiberias. When they passed the pillars of an ancient synagogue, the Ari took a cup of water from the sea, and gave it to Rabbi Ḥayyim to drink. He said, “Now that you have drunk this water, you will grasp this wisdom, since the water is from Miriam’s Well.” From then on, Rabbi Ḥayyim was able to grasp the Ari’s teachings.

*Aryeh Kaplan, Meditation and the Kabbalah, MKAK p.206<sup>3</sup>*

The pattern of the story is not unusual for the ancient Middle East. The act of drinking water from Lake Tiberias, in itself, did not convey spirituality. Symbolically, the rabbi in the story, by drinking water from this “well”, was drawing on the spiritual power of the great prophetess, which gave him the ability to understand his Master’s teachings.

1. *Genesis* 1:6–8.
2. *Exodus* 15:20–21; *Numbers* 12:1–16, 20:1, 26:59.
3. See Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital, *Shulḥan ‘Arukh ha-Ari*, *SAHA* p.97a; see also *Nagid U’Meṣavah* p.2b, *Toldot ha-Ari* p.163.

**Monogenēs** (Gk) *Lit.* Only-begotten, begotten of one, alone-begotten; the term commonly translated as Only-begotten in John’s gospel.

See also: **First-born Son, Only-begotten Son.**

**Mother, Mother of Wisdom** A mother is one who has given birth to young, subsequently providing care and attention to her offspring; commonly used metaphorically in Greek and Semitic languages for the Holy Spirit and Wisdom (both being feminine nouns). In what is probably an allusion to a similar passage in *Revelations*,<sup>1</sup> Jesus relates:

Even so did my Mother, the Holy Spirit,  
take me by one of my hairs  
and carry me away to the great mountain Tabor.

*Gospel of the Hebrews, in Origen: Commentary on John 2:12.87 (on John 1:3); cf. OG p.85*

Likewise, in the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, the “Mother” is the Holy Spirit:

Come, compassionate Mother....  
 Come, she that reveals the hidden mysteries.  
 Come, Mother of the seven houses (mansions, heavens),  
 that your rest may be in the eighth house.

*Acts of Thomas 27; cf. ANT p.376*

In one of the gnostic texts, the “Mother” is identified with the Creative Word:

This Creative Word became a Power of God,  
 and Lord and Saviour and Christ,  
 and King and Good and Father and Mother.

*Untitled Text 248:11, BC pp.258–59*

Wisdom (He. *Hokhmah*, Gk. *Sophia*) being feminine in Greek and Semitic languages, the term also appears as the “Mother of Wisdom”:

They have glorified and praised with the Living Spirit,  
 the Father of Truth and the Mother of Wisdom.

*Acts of Thomas 7, ANT p.368*

And:

Return, my son, to your first Father, God, and Wisdom your Mother,  
 from whom you came into being in the very beginning.

*Teachings of Silvanus 91; cf. NHS30 pp.296–97*

In Manichaean writings, the term is again used in a number of forms, as in the “Mother, the Maiden of all that lives”,<sup>2</sup> the “Mother of the beings of Light”.<sup>3</sup>

See also: **Holy Spirit, Maiden of Light, Virginal Spirit, Wisdom.**

1. *Book of Revelation* 21:9–10.

2. *Manichaean Psalm Book*, MPB p.145.

3. *Manichaean Hymns*, Angad Rōshnān VI:69, MHCP pp.152–53.

**Mouth of God, Mouth of the Lord, Mouth of the Most High** The mouth is the opening through which human beings and many other creatures take their food, breathe, and also utter sounds intended as communications of one kind or another. Metaphorically, the Word of God, the Voice of God or the Breath of God are all said to proceed from the Mouth of God, by analogy with human words and breath. The expression is encountered in

*Deuteronomy*, for example, where God ‘explains’ to Moses that man does not live by virtue of physical food, but by whatever “proceeds out of the Mouth of the Lord”; that is, the spiritual nourishment which He provides. Essentially, this means the Word or Utterance of God, which creates and sustains all creation:

And He humbled you, and let you hunger,  
and fed you with *manna*, which you knew not,  
neither did your fathers know;  
That He might make you know  
that man does not live by bread only,  
but by every word that proceeds  
out of the Mouth of the Lord does man live.

*Deuteronomy 8:3, JCL*

This is the text echoed by Jesus according to the gospel story of his temptation by the devil.<sup>1</sup> The term also occurs frequently in the *Psalms*, and is echoed in the early Christian *Odes of Solomon*, where the poet writes explicitly:

The Mouth of the Lord is the true Word,  
and the door of His Light.

*Odes of Solomon 12:3*

The term appears regularly in mystic literature of the period, as in the expression, the “Breath of His Mouth”, in one of the gnostic texts:

This is the Father ...  
Through the Breath of His Mouth,  
the Forethought inspired those without existence.  
They came into being through the will of this (One)  
because it is He who commands the All (the creation),  
so that it comes into existence.

*Untitled Text 230:3, BC pp.222–23*

See also: **Breath of God, dahān, Voice of God, Word of God.**

1. *Matthew 4:4.*

**mūl Nād, mūl Nām, mūl Shabd** (H/Pu) *Lit.* root (*mūl*) Sound (*Nād, Shabd*) or Name (*Nām*); the principal, essential or primal Sound; the creative Power or Sound Current as the root or source of life and energy in all things. Dariyā

Sāhib, for instance, referred to the creative Power as the *mūl Shabd*, where he seems to be referring expressly to the Sound that is heard in the eternal realm:

Light and sound arise from the root Sound (*mūl Shabd*),  
so make your attention one pointed,  
and let the *surat* (the soul's hearing faculty)  
catch the Sound Current with rapt attention.

This is the only way to rise to the root Sound (*mūl Shabd*).

*Dariyā Sāhib, Dariyā Sāgar, Chaupāī 165–66, DG2 p.17; cf. DSSB p.283*

And:

He is a Saint  
who is adorned with the root Name (*mūl Nām*)  
like a rosary of gems,  
and who rides the horse of Wisdom.

Knowledge remains empty without this root (*mūl*).

*Dariyā Sāhib, Prem Mūl, Chaupāī 167–68, DYD p.22, PMDS p.317; cf. DSSB p.220*

See also: **Nād, Nām, Root, Shabd.**

**myrrh** See **Fragrance.**

**Nād(a)** (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* sound, noise, chime; mystically, the eternal Sound or Melody; the Sound Current; used in the *Upanishads* and later texts for the Sound which created and maintains the entire universe. Saints and yogis have commonly spoken of the *anāhata Nāda* (unstruck Sound).

The primary characteristic of sound is vibration and movement. The physical senses are essentially organs which respond to movement and vibration of various kinds. The eyes respond to light or electromagnetic vibration. The sensation of sound results from the detection of vibrations in air or water. The response of the tongue and nose to different substances comes about through movement and activity at a molecular and atomic level. Touch is a response to the shape, consistency and density of things – characteristics of matter derived from the internal motion and interaction of atoms and molecules.

Everything at a physical level is the result of vibration and movement. What creatures consider to be the physical universe is actually no more than the input to their sense organs of vibrations of various kinds which are then experienced in their own minds. Even scientific studies of physical matter



reveal that its fundamental reality is one of intense movement at subatomic and even deeper levels.

Existence and movement are thus inextricably intertwined. The one cannot exist without the other. And while scientists have been very astute at describing the characteristics of this motion and utilizing this study in the development of technology, they admit that the fundamental source of this amazing and continuous motion is unknown. The universe is seemingly in perpetual motion at both submicroscopic as well as galactic levels, but the fundamental reason why remains a mystery.

Some scientists and philosophers have come close to the descriptions of mystics when they have suggested that the fundamental reality of the universe is a Sound or a Motion that rings and flows through all things. But the idea is not a new one. Mystics have said that this Sound can be known as reality through direct, personal mystic experience. In the *Vedas*, among the oldest of the world's writings, this creative Sound is called the *Nāda*, which means Sound, while other Indian mystics have called it the *Shabd*, which means Word or Sound. Many other similar names have also been used.

Mystics say that this creative Sound is God Himself in dynamic action. God is the centre of all existence. He is the One – at rest, motionless, undifferentiated, silent and pure. His act of creation is really an act of projection or emanation. He makes waves within Himself; and the primary wave or motion from which all other motion is derived, and by which it is actively sustained, is His Sound, also called His Word, His Cry, His Voice, His Call, His Name – and by many other names. 'Ināyat Khān says:

Vibration was the first original aspect of *Brahmā*, the creator. Every impulse, every action on any plane of existence has its origin in the one Source.

*'Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK8 p.145*

And:

The *Vedānta* speaks of *Nāda Brahman*, Sound-God, meaning that the Word or Sound or Vibration was the creative aspect of God, which shows that the mystic does not differ much from the scientist who says that movement is the basis of the whole creation. When one finds this similarity between the conception of the scientists of today and that of the mystics, the teachers of ancient times, one begins to agree with Solomon that there is nothing new under the sun.<sup>1</sup> The difference is that the mystics of ancient times did not make a limit called movement or vibration, but they traced its source in the divine Spirit.

*'Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 p.185*

Just as the mind, through the physical senses, can perceive some of this Vibration or Sound at the physical level, though without realizing what it is, so too do the mind and soul possess the faculty of hearing on the inner planes of creation. And there they can realize the source of what they hear. The mind and soul are also endowed with the faculty of inner sight, but – as in the physical realm – this sight is derived from the vibration of the ‘substance’ there. That is, inner sight is also derived from the primary Sound.

All of creation, then, possesses its own Sound, and mystics point out that this Sound is experienced differently in different realms. In the absence of any adequate language to describe things which lie beyond this world, they have likened these sounds to the sounds of this world. Speaking of the sounds heard in the early stages of meditation, the *Nāda Bindu Upanishad* says:

Sitting firmly in the cross-legged posture (*siddhāsana*),  
the *yogī* should adopt the yogic pose of the devotee (*vaishṇavī mudrā*),  
and listen fixedly to the Sound (*Nāda*) from within  
that comes from the right side (*lit.* right ear).

This practice of (listening to) the inner Sound (*Nāda*)  
makes him deaf to external sounds.  
Overcoming all obstacles,  
he will enter *turiya pada* (superconsciousness)  
within fifteen days.

In the beginning of the practice,  
many kinds of loud sound (*nāda*) are heard.  
But as the practice progresses, they increase in pitch  
and are experienced with increasing subtlety.

At first, there are sounds like those coming from the ocean,  
from the clouds, from a kettledrum and from waterfalls.  
In an intermediate stage, they are like those  
emanating from a *mardala* (small drum), a bell and a horn.  
Lastly, they are like those produced  
from tinkling bells, a flute,  
a *vīṇā* and the humming of bees.  
Thus, many kinds of sound (*nāda*) are heard  
possessing increasing subtlety.

When he reaches that stage  
where the sound (*nāda*) of the great kettledrum is heard,  
he should try to distinguish  
only the more increasingly subtle sounds (*nādas*).

He may shift his concentration  
 from the gross sound (*nāda*) to the subtle,  
 or from the subtle to the gross,  
 but he should not allow his mind  
 to be diverted from them towards others.

The mind having at first concentrated on any one sound,  
 fixes firmly to that, and is absorbed in it.  
 The mind, becoming insensible to external impressions,  
 becomes one with the sound (*nāda*), as milk with water,  
 rapidly becoming absorbed in *chidākāsha* (sky of the body).

Being indifferent towards all objects,  
 the *yogin*, having controlled his passions,  
 should by continual practice  
 concentrate his attention upon the Sound (*Nāda*)  
 that destroys the mind.

Having abandoned all thoughts  
 and becoming freed from all actions,  
 always focus attention on the Sound (*Nāda*).  
 The mind will then merge completely in the Sound (*Nāda*).

*Nāda Bindu Upanishad* 31–41; cf. *TMU* pp.196–97, 315–16, *YU* pp.177–78

The author of the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, clearly aware of the *Nāda Bindu Upanishad*, writes in a similar manner:

The *yogī* ... should listen with collected mind to the *Nāda* heard inside the right ear. Closing the ears, eyes, nose and mouth, a clear, distinct sound will be heard in the purified *sushumṇā* (central current of life energy)...

A feeling of bliss will be experienced in the void of the heart, and the unstruck Sound (*Anāhata*), like the sound of tinkling ornaments, will be heard within the body.

*Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 4:66–67, 69; cf. *HYP* pp.56–57

And:

In my opinion, contemplation on the space between the eyebrows is the best for rapid attainment of the mindless (*unmanī*) state. Even for those of lesser intellect, it is a suitable method for attaining perfection in *rāja yoga*. The *laya* (absorption) attained through *Nāda* gives immediate experience.

The bliss in the hearts of *yogīshvars* who remain in *samādhi* (absorption) through attention to *Nāda* is beyond description....

Closing the ears with his fingers, the *muni* (sage) should listen attentively to the inner *Nāda* until the mind becomes fixed in it. Then the state of stillness is achieved.

By sustained listening to the *Nāda*, awareness of external sound diminishes. The *yogī* thereby feels great joy, overcoming mental distractions within fifteen days.

*Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 4:79–82; cf. *HYP* pp.58–59

The writer continues, now following the *Nāda Bindu Upanishad* quite closely, though adding to it:

Just as the bee drinks nectar, caring not for the fragrance (of the flower), so does a mind which is always absorbed in the Sound (*Nāda*) entertain no craving for sensory things. Bound to the sweetness of the Sound (*Nāda*), it abandons its flitting nature.

With the sharp goad of *anāhata Nāda*, the mind, which is like a rogue elephant roaming in the garden of the senses, is controlled.

When the mind is caught in the snare of *Nāda*, it gives up its restlessness, and becomes calm like a bird with clipped wings.

Those desirous of the kingdom of *yoga* should take up the practice of the *anāhata Nāda* with a collected mind, free from all cares.

The *Nāda* is like a lure for catching a deer (mind). When caught like a deer, it can also be killed like a deer.

The *Nāda* is the bolt on the stable door, locking the horse (the mind) inside. A *yogī* must resolve to meditate regularly upon the *Nāda*.

As liquid mercury is solidified by sulphur, so is the mind bound by *Nāda*, and freed from restlessness....

As a serpent is captivated (by music), forgetting everything else, so too does the mind cease from movement on hearing the *Nāda*.

*Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 4:89–96; cf. *HYP* pp.59–60;

cf. *Nāda Bindu Upanishad* 42, 44–45

The *Haṃsa Upanishad* enumerates similar initial sounds heard after strenuous repetition of a *mantra*. It also adds that the tenth sound can be heard without hearing the first nine. “*Chinī*” and “*chiñchiñī*” are onomatopoeic words, like ‘tweet’:

*Nāda* is heard after repeating this *japa* (*mantra*)

ten million times.

*Nāda* is of ten kinds:

The first is 'chiṇī';  
 the second is 'chiñchiṇī';  
 the third is the sound (*nāda*) of a bell (*ghaṇṭā*);  
 the fourth, that of a conch (*shankha*);  
 the fifth, of a lute (*tantrī*);  
 the sixth is the sound (*nāda*) of cymbals (*tāla*);  
 the seventh of a flute (*venu*);  
 the eighth of *mṛidanga* (double-ended drum);  
 the ninth of *bherī* (a coarse wind instrument);  
 the tenth of the clouds (*i.e.* thunder).  
 He may experience the tenth without the first nine sounds.

*Haṃsa Upanishad 16; cf. TMU pp.163, 299*

Echoing the *Upanishads*, and pointing out that these sounds emanate from *sahans dal kanwal* (thousand-petalled lotus), the central powerhouse of the astral realm, Charaṇdās writes:

In the heavens is a thousand-petalled lotus,  
 where recitation is performed a thousand times (countlessly),  
 and where a powerful, radiant light is manifest.  
 Seek this by means of *yoga*,  
 and behold it with the eye of the soul.  
 There, ten forms of the *Anāhad* (Unstruck) resound,  
 into which your being merges.

*Charaṇdās, in MSP2 pp.89–90*

More or less following the *Haṃsa Upanishad*, he also enumerates the sounds:

There are ten forms of sound (*nād*): ...  
 The first is like the chirping of *chihn*  
 the second, like the sound of *chihn chihn*.  
 The third is the tinkling of a small bell (*ghaṇṭā*),  
 the fourth, the sound of conch (*shankh*).  
 The fifth sounds like a *vīṇā* (*bīn*, a stringed instrument),  
 the sixth, like cymbals (*tāl*).  
 The seventh is like the sweet strains of a flute (*muraliyā*),  
 the eighth sounds like a *pakhāvaj* (double-ended drum),  
 the ninth, the sound of a *naṭīrī* (trumpet),  
 and the tenth rises like the roaring of a lion.  
 After leaving the nine and going towards the tenth,  
 you will hear the unstruck Melody (*Anhad*) and merge into it.  
 Then the soul will become as the unfathomable *Brahm*.

*Charaṇdās, Bhakti Sāgar, Aṣṭāṅga Yoga Varṇan 58, BSCD p.64*

According to those Saints who teach the higher Sound Current, all these sounds are preliminary. The Sound that confers salvation comes from the supreme Source. Referring, perhaps, to this higher Sound, the author of the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* observes:

All bad *karma* is destroyed by the constant practise of *Nāda*. The finite mind and *prāṇa* dissolve into the supreme Spirit (*Paramātmā*).

*Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 4:104; cf. HYP pp.61–62

When speaking of this Sound, Indian Saints have commonly used such expressions as *nirmal Nād* (pure Sound), *Nād bindu* (seed Sound, primal Sound) and *mūl Nād* (root Sound, essential Sound). It is called the immaculate or pure Sound to distinguish it from the lower sounds:

Obtaining divine comprehension from the true *Guru*,  
the mortal abides within the Lord's true home  
in the state of seedless trance.  
Nānak, within him resounds the  
immaculate Music (*nirmal Nād*, pure Sound)  
of the Name (*Shabd Dhun*, Melody of the Word),  
and he merges in the Lord's true Name (*Nām*).

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth* 1038, MMS

It is identified as the seed or primal Sound because it is the primal, creative, life-giving Vibration out of which all things grow, and in which all things are present as potential, just as a great tree grows from a small seed within which the blueprint and primal energy for the tree exist:

Only he who rejoices in the primal Sound (*Nād bindu*)  
can be called a devotee of the Lord.

*Kabīr, Shabdāvalī* 1, *Jhūlnā* 6:3, KSSI p.74

See also: **anāhata Nāda**.

1. *Ecclesiastes* 1:9–10.

**Nāda Brahman** (S) *Lit.* the Sound (*Nāda*) (that is) *Brahman*; the Sound that is the absolute Reality; the sacred Sound, *Om*.

See also: **Nāda, Om**.

**Nafas, Nafas al-Raḥmān** (A/P) *Lit.* breath (*nafas*); the Breath of the All-Merciful (*Nafas al-Raḥmān*); the divine Breath; a Sufi term for the creative Power of God. The expression, *nafaḥāt al-Raḥmān* (the exhalations of the Merciful One), is used in a similar fashion.

According to Sufi thought, the world is created by the expiration of the Breath of God, and it is dissolved with His inspiration, or the indrawing of His Breath. Mystically, the creation is created and dissolved every moment. It is His constant, continually sustained manifestation. The divine creative process is ultradynamic. The Muslim profession of faith, repeated often in the *Qur'ān*, “*Allāhu lā ilāha illā Huwa (Allāh – there is no god but He)*”<sup>1</sup> is sometimes interpreted as a symbol of this divine breathing. “There is no god” indicates the emanation of created things – of things ‘other than God’. This emanation is His out-breathing. “But *Allāh*” points to their return to the eternal Unity. This is His in-breathing.

Ibn ‘Arabī, one of the most influential of all Sufi writers, frequently uses *Nafas* and *Nafas al-Raḥmān* for the divine creative power or Word underlying all things:

God says, “Our only Speech to a thing, when We desire it ... is to say to it ‘Be!’”<sup>2</sup> “Be!” is exactly what He speaks.... Thereby the entities become manifest within the Breath of the All-Merciful (*Nafas al-Raḥmān*), just as letters become manifest within the human breath.

*Ibn ‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:401.29, in SPK p.128*

Since every created thing is a manifestation of this Breath, this Word, each thing itself can be called a ‘word’:

In the context of the all-merciful Breath, the *Shaykh* (Ibn ‘Arabī) refers to many Quranic verses that mention the creative act of God in terms of His Speech or that allude to the infinite ‘words of God’. These infinite words are the individual entities or creatures. When the All-Merciful exhales, He speaks, and within His Breath the whole cosmos takes form.

*W.C. Chittick, Imaginal Worlds, IW p.19*

Thus, Ibn ‘Arabī compares God’s Breath and its effects – its words – with the process of human breathing and speech:

The breath of the breather is none other than the nonmanifest (essence) of the breather. Then the breath becomes manifest as the entities of letters and words.... For the letters are not other than the Breath, nor

are they the same as the Breath; the word is not other than the letters,  
nor is it the same as the letters.

*Ibn ‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:396.13, 27, in SPK pp.129–30*

*Nafas* and *Nafas al-Raḥmān* are also used in a more general sense to mean the grace, power or scent of God’s presence which wafts, unexpected and unearned, to the soul. Sometimes, these terms refer to a more explicit spiritual experience, a perception by the inner faculty of smell of some reality not perceivable by the physical senses. But, in essence, these usages refer back to the creative Power, the ultimate source of all spiritual inspiration in creation.

See also: **Breath of God, nafḥah, pneuma, wind.**

1. *e.g. Qur’ān* 3:1, 4:87, etc.
2. *Qur’ān* 16:40.

**Nafas ‘Īsá (A/P)** *Lit.* Breath (*Nafas*) of Jesus (*‘Īsá*); a Sufi expression, drawn from the Christian gospel stories, for the power that can bring the dead to life, the divine grace that arouses the spiritually dead and leads them to real life; also called *Dam-i ‘Īsá*; essentially, the spiritual influx of the Creative Word.

See also: **Dam-i ‘Īsá.**

**naḥkh (A/P), nafḥah (A), nafḥat (P)** (pl. *naḥāḥāt*) *Lit.* breathing, blowing, exhalation, breath, diffusing (of an odour). The mystical connotations of *naḥḥah* resemble those of *Nafas* (Breath). Like the Jews, Christians and other Middle Easterners before them, Sufis spoke of God ‘breathing’ His power and His life into the world, Breath being a metaphor for the divine creative power. Shabistarī says, “From the Breathing (*Naḥkh*) of His soul, the human form appeared.”<sup>1</sup>

In Sufi poetry, a “sweet exhalation (*naḥḥah*) of divine grace and mercy” coming to a seeker is a gift, free and undeserved, and a brief opportunity to be enjoyed while it lasts. A traditional saying (*ḥadīth*) says, “Perchance one of the breaths (*naḥāḥāt*) will reach you, and then you will never more be miserable.” Another *ḥadīth* urges, “Address yourselves to the sweet exhalations of divine mercy (*naḥāḥāt raḥmat al-lāhi*).”<sup>2</sup>

See also: **Dam, Nafas al-Raḥmān.**



1. Shabistārī, *Gulshan-i Rāz* 755, GR p.98.
2. *Ḥadīth*, in *MJR* 7 p.132.

**Nām** (H/Pu) *Lit.* name; mystically, the Name of God; the Word; the Sound Current; also called the *Shabd* (Word, Sound) and by many other names; the divine or unstruck Music which resounds within every human being; the dynamic and ever active energy and creative Power of the supreme Creator; also found in such expressions as *Nām Dhun* (Melody of the Name), *Nām Ras* (Elixir of the Name), *Amrit Nām* (immortal Name), *nij Nām* (inherent Name), *nihakshar Nām* (unwritten Name), *Sat Nām* (true Name), and so on.

God's creative Power is known as *Nām* or the Name of God because it is through His Name that He can be known. God in His ultimate essence is one, with no division. Where there is no division or differentiation, there can be no names, for there is no other to be called by a name when all is one. The creative Current of God is called His Name, because it represents the first creative division as the One sets out to become the multiplicity of the creation. Yet the primal oneness of God is never tainted. He remains always one. This is one of the essential paradoxes of mysticism, which can only be resolved by direct mystical experience of God.

*Nām* has been commonly used by mystics throughout India as a name for the creative Power of God, just as the Name of God has been used as an expression in many languages for this same Power, dating as far back as records can be traced.

*Nām* is the unique principle of all existence, the sole means of salvation, and the one essence of all. It is one with God, and the Source from which His highest Saints emanate. As a consequence, Saints, sages, seekers and philosophers of all places and times have given *Nām* various names; and as there are hundreds of languages, its names are many. It is the *Shabd* of the *Gurus*; the *Logos* of the ancient Greeks; the Word, Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost and the Comforter of the New Testament; the *anāhad Bāñī* of the Sikhs; the *Kalām*, *Kun*, *Bāng-i āsmānī*, *Nidā'-i Sulṭānī*, *al-Ism al-Aẓam* and so forth of the Sufis; the silent Whisper, the silent Music and the sonorous Sound of John of the Cross; the *Nād*, *Nām*, *Rām Nām*, *Rām Dhun* and so forth of the Hindus; and so on.

*Nām* is the Lord Himself in the form of primal or creative Power. It is His means of projecting Himself as creation. It is Love, truth, consciousness and bliss. Known to and experienced by human beings within themselves, in the form of sound and light, it has therefore come to be known as the *Shabd* (Sound) or Sound Current (*Shabd Dhārā*). Those who know it are drawn irresistibly to it.

*Nām* is in and behind all things and is the motion, the life and the soul of all things, just as the motion and life of a puppet are given to it by unseen

strings. The Lord, His Name and the soul are all of one essence. *Nām* creates and sustains all things, and is the life and light of men. Taking the form of a true *Guru*, *Nām* reconnects *jīvas* (incarnated souls) to itself through initiation, and takes them back to God. When it is withdrawn from created realms, those realms cease to exist. This is dissolution (*pralaya*).

The frequency with which Indian mystics have spoken of this Name provides an insight into the degree of importance they attach to it. Kabīr says that there are countless names of God, but none of them are the “primal Name”:

There are millions of names (of God) in the world,  
but not one leads to salvation.  
Few are aware of the primal Name (*ādi Nām*),  
for it is a secret repetition, known only to a rare one.  
*Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Nām 1:5, KSS p.84*

He says that the real inner *Nām* has to be realized. Talk alone is insufficient:

Is there anyone  
who can tell me of the Lord’s Name (*Nām*)?  
Anyone who can bring to my view  
that which is imperceptible?  
All talk endlessly about His Name (*Nām*):  
no one knows its profound secret.  
Outward talk and show are meaningless.  
Only he receives joy and peace  
who sings of it having seen and experienced it.  
It is beyond words, O Kabīr:  
no one can know its secret without realizing it.  
*Kabīr, Granthāvalī, Pad 218, KG pp.120–21*

Guru Nānak observes that without contact with this Name, the soul wanders in ignorance:

Without God’s Name (*Nām*), the thoughtless fools  
stray in superstition, and are ruined.  
They, whose mind contains not God’s true Name (*Hari Nām*) and devotion,  
bewail loudly in the end.  
Nānak utters a truth, through the true *Gurbānī* (*Shabd*, Word),  
the since long, separated souls unite with the Lord.  
*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 439, MMS*

Guru Arjun says that it is the support of everything in creation:

By the Name (*Nām*)  
 are sustained all the creatures;  
 By the Name (*Nām*) are supported  
 the regions of the earth (*khaṇḍ*, regions)  
 and solar systems (*brahmaṇḍ*, the universe);  
 By God's Name (*Nām*)  
 are supported the *Smṛitis*, the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas*.  
 By the Name's (*Nām*) support,  
 the mortals hear of divine knowledge and meditation;  
 Lord's Name (*Nām*) is the prop of the skies and underworlds;  
 Lord's Name (*Nām*) is the prop of all the bodies;  
 By the Name (*Nām*) are supported all the worlds and spheres;  
 Men have been saved by associating with the Name (*Nām*),  
 and hearing it with their ears.  
 Whom the Master mercifully attaches to His Name (*Nām*),  
 O Nānak, the servant obtains salvation,  
 and gets into the fourth state of beatitude.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 284, MMS*

Nāmdev simply extols the worth of *Nām*:

God's Name (*Nām*) is the jewel;  
 God's Name (*Nām*) is precious;  
 Invoking His Name (*Nām*) extinguishes all suffering.  
 God's Name (*Nām*) is my caste;  
 God's Name (*Nām*) is my creed;  
 God's Name (*Nām*) transforms men's lives.  
 God's Name (*Nām*) is the source of all joy and bliss.  
 God's Name (*Nām*) cuts the noose of *Yam* (the lord of death).  
 God's Name (*Nām*) is the essence of all regions.  
 God's Name (*Nām*) has ferried Nāmdev across the ocean of existence.

*Nāmdev, Padāvalī 2, Pad 1, SNP2 p.1*

And:

Listen with all ears, listen with rapt attention:  
 the Name (*Nām*) of the Lord is beauty incarnate.  
 Meditate on *Nām* and become fearless.  
*Nām* alone is the duty, *Nām* alone is true ritual,  
*Nām* alone verily is true religion.  
*Nām* is His real form, *Nām* indeed is formless,  
*Nām* is purity, *Nām* is perfection.  
 This is the true conduct, this is the true thought.

*Nām* alone sustains creation for all time,  
*Nām* alone dispels the darkness of delusion.  
 Such is His Name (*Nām*), sung incessantly by Nāma.  
*Nāmdev, Gāthā 1988, SNG p.755*

Dādū, too, places the value of *Nām* “high above all the world”:

The Name (*Nām*) alone is venerable:  
 poor in comparison are the three worlds (of creation).  
 How can anyone behold it?  
 High above all the world  
 stands the banner of the Name (*Nām*).  
 Thus does Dādū behold it...

All treasures accompany the Name (*Nām*) of God.  
 When the Name (*Nām*), the wish-granting gem,  
 dwells within your heart,  
 then all treasures are in your hand...

Whether in the world below or heaven above,  
 he who is true repeats only the Name (*Nām*).  
 The Name (*Nām*) is at the height of the entire universe,  
 and dwells in all regions.

*Dādū, Bānī 1, Sumiran 106, 108, 116, DDB1 pp.24–25*

Paltū says that the treasures of *Nām* are in the care of the Saints, and it is only from them that it can be obtained:

The Name (*Nām*) of the Lord wells up in the Saints,  
 and the Saints are steeped in His Name (*Nām*).  
 The Saints are steeped in His Name (*Nām*),  
 and they alone can bestow the gift of *Nām*.  
 Adepts in the practice of *Nām*,  
 they impart the means of uniting with it.  
 Austerities and penances, fasts and pilgrimages,  
 may be endlessly resorted to,  
 but without the help of the Saint,  
 access to His Name (*Nām*) can never be gained.  
 Try as you may in a million ways,  
 you will still wander endlessly:  
 The chamber of *Nām* will not be yours,  
 until you come to the door of the Saint.  
*Nām* lies, O Paltū, beyond the reach of the *prāṇas* (life energies) –

It is at the beginning.  
 It is at the end.  
 The Name (*Nām*) of the Lord wells up in the Saints,  
 and the Saints are steeped in His Name (*Nām*).

*Paltū, Bānī 1, Kuṇḍalī 14, PSB1 p.10*

Mīrābāī speaks of her love for the Name, and its effect on her:

O Beloved, I am enamoured of Your Name (*Nām*).  
 Through the practice of Your Name (*Nām*),  
 I am told that souls, though as heavy as stones,  
 can float with ease to the opposite shore....  
 My Master gave me this powerful and mighty Name (*Nām*),  
 and I recognized my true self.

*Mīrābāī, Bṛīhat Padāvalī 1, Pad 292:1–2, 9–10, MBP1 p.139; cf. MDL p.33*

And:

In the deep indelible colour (of *Nām*)  
 am I dyed, O mother!  
 I have drunk from the cup of nectar,  
 and entered the state of bliss.

This is an intoxication which does not fade,  
 whatever the circumstances....  
 Having drunk the cup of *Nām*,  
 no other colour (pleasure) now appeals to me.  
 Says Mīrā, O my Lord,  
 all false colours have now faded and gone.

*Mīrābāī, Bṛīhat Padāvalī 1, Pad 493:1–2, 8–9, MBP1 p.239; cf. MDL p.33*

And Tukārām says that nothing compares with the mystic Name of God:

Even the gift of this earth, encompassed by the oceans,  
 could not equal the Name (*Nām*) of the Lord.  
 Be not a prey to the demon of lethargy:  
 night and day repeat the Name (*Nām*) of the Lord.

Recitation of the *Vedas* and other scriptures  
 does not even touch the hem of the Lord's Name (*Nām*).  
 Pilgrimages to holy places, to Vārāṇasī and Prayāg,  
 cannot outweigh the glory of the Lord's Name (*Nām*).  
 Penances, austerities, even death by the saw of Vārāṇasī,  
 cannot compare with the Name (*Nām*) of the Lord.

The Name (*Nām*) of the Lord is the highest of practices,  
the Name (*Nām*) of the Lord is the essence, O Tukā.

*Tukārām, Gāthā 2298, STG p.392*

See also: **ch'áng Míng, al-Ism al-A'zam, Name, Shem.**

**Nām Dhun, Nām Dhun Bāṇī** (Pu) *Lit.* Sound (*Bāṇī*) of the Melody (*Dhun*) of the Name (*Nām*); the music of the mystic Name of God; a name for the creative Power highlighting its audible aspect:

All the comforts (*sukh*, peace) of emancipation (*mukat*)  
are in the Name's and *Gurbāṇī*'s meditation  
(*Nām Dhun Bāṇī*, the Sound of the Melody of the Name):  
So enshrine I the true Name (*Nām*) within my mind.  
Without the Name (*Nām*), one is released not, O Nānak,  
so swim thou across, embarking on the Name's (*Nām*) true boat.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1013, MMS*

And:

This composition is the praise of the world Lord and the recitation  
of the Name  
(*Nām Dhun Bāṇī*, the Sound of the Melody of the Name):  
about which the *Smṛitis*, *Shāstras* and *Vedas* speak.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 296, MMS*

See also: **Dhun, Bāṇī.**

**Name, Name of God, Name of Life, Name of the Father, Name of the Lord, Name of Truth** The Name is one of the commonest terms for the divine Word, the creative Power of God. In Judaism, where it is often called the Holy Name (*Shem Kodsho*), it has been used from the earliest period right through to modern times. It is present throughout both Jewish and Christian biblical literature, and is commonly encountered in early Christian writings. Sufi and Indian mystics have also used the term extensively.

A name implies a distinction between the named and the one who uses the name. The mystic Name is God's first emanation. When He is one, and all there is, there is no place for names. When the Name is emanated, then there are two; hence, there is place for a name, so to speak. A name is also that by which something or someone is known; it is the starting point for the development of a relationship. Likewise, the mystic Name is that by

which God can be known, the means by which the soul can develop a personal relationship with Him. Moreover, a name is intended to capture the essence of the thing named, and since the creative Power is formed of God's primal essence, it is called His Name.

In Himself, God has no need of a humanly given name. As the medieval Jewish mystical treatise, the *Zohar*, says:

Every existing thing and every name testifies to Him, to the fact that, since He was single and alone before He created the world, there was no need for Him to be given these names (*Adonai, Yahweh, El, Elohim zeva'ot*) or other titles, such as 'merciful' and 'gracious, 'long-suffering' and so on – 'Judge', 'powerful', 'strong', and many other such. He is given all these names and titles for the sake of all the worlds and their creatures, so that His dominion over them may be demonstrated.

*Zohar 3:275b–285a, Ra'aya Meheimna, WZl pp.264–65*

The *Zohar* also says:

He is called by all the names,  
but He has no known name.  
But every single name testifies to Him.

*Zohar 3:275b–285a, Ra'aya Meheimna, WZl p.264*

The expression, 'to do something in the name of the Lord' – or in anybody else's name – means to act as an agent. In the Bible, this meaning is certainly intended in many places. Nevertheless, there are instances where a superphysical power, not inherent in any verbal name, is clearly meant. The Hebrew term is *Shem*. This mystic Name of the Lord is said to give deliverance:

And it shall come to pass  
that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord  
shall be delivered.

*Joel 2:32, KJV*

It can lift a soul out of this world, the "lowest dungeon" of creation:

I called upon Thy Name, O Lord,  
out of the lowest dungeon.

*Lamentations 3:55, JPS*

It is also a place of refuge for those seeking true spirituality:

The Name of the Lord is a strong tower;  
 The righteous man runneth into it,  
 and is set up on high.

*Proverbs 18:10, JPS*

It is the “Holy Name”, worthy of great praise:

Bless the Lord, O my soul;  
 And all that is within me,  
 bless His Holy Name.

*Psalms 103:1, KJV*

It is also trustworthy:

For our heart shall rejoice in Him,  
 because we have trusted in His Holy Name.

*Psalms 33:21, KJV*

And it is “glorious”:

O Lord, our Lord,  
 how glorious is Thy Name in all the earth!

*Psalms 8:2, JPS*

The psalmist is speaking of a mystic reality that can be experienced inside. Somewhat later in time, perhaps around 150 BCE, but also from the Jewish tradition, the psalms among the Dead Sea Scrolls speak of the same Name. It permits man to fulfil his “everlasting destiny ... in a common rejoicing”, says the unknown writer. The “everlasting destiny” common to all mankind is to return to God through contact with His mystic Name:

Thou hast allotted to man an everlasting destiny,  
 amidst the spirits of knowledge,  
 that he may praise Thy Name in a common rejoicing,  
 and recount Thy marvels before all Thy works.

*Thanksgiving Hymns XI:20–25 (10), CDSS p.261*

Such a destiny is fulfilled by meditating “all day long” on God’s creative Power or “Thy Might”, synonymous with “Thy Name”:

I will sing Thy mercies,  
 and on Thy Might I will meditate all day long.  
 I will bless Thy Name evermore.



I will declare Thy glory in the midst of the sons of men,  
and my soul shall delight in Thy great goodness.

*Thanksgiving Hymns XIX:5–10 (21), CDSS p.288*

It will bring them into the company of the “Sons of heaven”, a reference either to the mystics, their disciples, or both:

Who among all Thy creatures  
is able to recount Thy wonders?  
May Thy Name be praised  
by the mouth of all men!  
May they bless Thee for ever  
in accordance with their understanding,  
and proclaim Thee with the voice of praise  
in the company of the Sons of heaven!

*Thanksgiving Hymns XIX:24–26 (22), CDSS p.289*

Further forward in time, the first-century Alexandrian and Greek-speaking Jew, Philo Judaeus, noted for his mystical and allegorical interpretation of biblical writings, explicitly equates the Name of God with the *Logos*. He writes of

God’s First-born, the *Logos*. And many names are his; for he is called Beginning (*Archē*), and Name of God, and *Logos*, and the Man-after-the-Likeness (*i.e.* the Image of God).

*Philo Judaeus, On the Confusion of Tongues 28; cf. PCW4 pp.88–91, TGH1 p.234*

The term must have been well known to Jesus and his followers, and though its import is commonly lost in the New Testament, it does appear among the various sayings of Jesus, some of which are perhaps more mystical than others. In Matthew, it is difficult to know whether the meaning is mystical or general:

Our Father which art in heaven:  
hallowed be Thy Name.

*Matthew 6:9, KJV*

And:

Ye shall be hated of all men for my Name’s sake.

*Matthew 10:22, KJV*

But in John’s gospel, characteristically, the meaning of the Name is more obviously mystical:

While I was with them in the world,  
I kept them in Thy Name.

*John 17:12, KJV*

And:

But as many as received him,  
to them gave he power to become the sons of God,  
even to them that believe on his Name.

*John 1:12, KJV*

In the early Christian literature, there are many references to the Name which support the suggestion that it refers to something greater than any humanly given name. In the *Acts of Thomas*, Judas Thomas says to a seeker who wishes to hear the Name of Jesus:

You are not able to hear his true Name now at this time,  
but the name that is given to him is Jesus the Messiah.

*Acts of Thomas VIII; cf. AAA p.294*

Here, there is no doubt about the distinction between the human name and the “true” or mystic Name. In the mythological *Preaching of Andrew*, Jesus says that this Name gives spiritual strength, permitting his disciples to find him within themselves:

Let your hearts be strengthened by my Name,  
and you shall learn that I am with you,  
and dwell within you.

*Preaching of Andrew, MAA p.10*

In the *Acts of John*, the Name turns the soul away from “Error” or Satan and opens up the vision of inner realities:

We glorify your Name,  
which turns us away from Error  
and ruthless Deceit (Satan):  
We glorify you who have shown  
before our eyes that which we have seen:  
We bear witness to your lovingkindness,  
which appears in many various ways:  
We praise your merciful Name, O Lord.

*Acts of John 85; cf. ANT p.259*

The Manichaean psalms speak of the Name which calms the stormy “sea” of the mind, agitated by existence in the world:

In the midst of the sea, Jesus, guide me:  
do not abandon us that the waves may not overwhelm us.  
When I utter your Name over the (stormy) sea,  
it stills its waves.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.151*

Among the gnostic literature, in the *Prayer of the Apostle Paul*, God is invoked as pre-existing in the Name:

I invoke You, the One who is,  
and who pre-existed in the Name  
which is exalted above every name.  
*Prayer of the Apostle Paul A:11–13, NHS22 pp.8–9*

The *Gospel of the Egyptians* speaks of the “great Name”:

This great Name of Yours is upon me,  
O self-begotten perfect One who is not outside me.  
*Gospel of the Egyptians 66; cf. NHS4 p.156*

The *Gospel of Truth* explicitly equates the Name with the Son “who came forth from Him” – the creative Power or first emanation. It is also “invisible” and “not spoken”, but becomes “revealed” or manifested “through a Son” – a Master. It could hardly be expressed more clearly:

Now the Name of the Father is the Son. It is He who first gave a name to the one (the Son) who came forth from Him.... His is the Name; His is the Son. It is possible for him (the Son) to be seen (in human form). The Name, however, is invisible because it alone is the mystery of the invisible which comes to ears that are completely filled with it by him (the Son). For indeed, the Father’s Name is not spoken, but is revealed through a Son.

*Gospel of Truth 38; cf. NHS22 pp.110–11*

The author of the *Tripartite Tractate* first says that God is beyond all the names that men use for Him. He then goes on to say that “he who arose from Him” – meaning the creative Power – is the “first Name of all names”, the “First One”; and he continues by describing this mystic “Name” as the “Form of the Formless”, the “Body of the Bodiless”, and so on:

It is impossible for anyone to conceive of Him or think of Him. Or, can anyone approach there, toward the Exalted One, toward the Pre-existent in the proper sense? But all the names conceived or spoken about Him are presented in honour, as a trace of Him, according to the ability of each one of those who glorify Him.

Now he who arose from Him when He stretched himself out for begetting and for knowledge on the part of the Totalities (the realms of creation), he [is the first] of all names ... and he is, in the proper sense, the sole First One, [the] man of the Father, that is, the one whom I call:

the Form of the Formless,  
 the Body of the Bodiless,  
 the Face of the Invisible,  
 the Word of the Unutterable,  
 the Mind of the Inconceivable,  
 the Fountain which flowed from him,  
 the Root of those who are planted,  
 and the God of those who exist,  
 the Light of those whom he illumines,  
 the love of those whom he loved,  
 the providence of those for whom he providentially cares,  
 the Wisdom of those whom he made wise,  
 the Power of those to whom he gives power,  
 the assembly of those whom he assembles to him,  
 the revelation of the things which are sought after,  
 the eye of those who see,  
 the Breath of those who breathe,  
 the Life of those who live,  
 the Unity of those who are mixed with the Totalities.

*Tripartite Tractate 65–66; cf. NHS22 pp.214–17*

The term also appears commonly in Mandaean texts. In one, it is described as “that one great Name of Life”:

Praises to that one great Name of Life,  
 which is above all names.  
 This Name is founded upon the great place of light,  
 on the everlasting abode and on the city of ‘uthras (spirits),  
 and on the Beam who was greater than all beams,  
 with whose light all beams shine.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 76; cf. CPM p.78*

Finally, the Name is also found in a number of lists of epithets which were used for the creative Power or Word of God in early Christian times. In the *Acts of John*, alluding to many of the parables of Jesus concerning this Power, John says:

We glorify Your Name  
that was spoken through the Son ...

We glorify Your Way; we glorify Your Seed, the *Logos*,  
Grace, Faith, Salt, the ineffable Pearl,  
the Treasure, the Plough, the Net,  
the Greatness, the Diadem.

Him that for us was called (became) the Son of Man,  
that gave us Truth, Rest, Knowledge, Power,  
the Commandment, the Confidence, Hope, Love,  
Liberty, Refuge in You.

For You Lord, are alone the Root of immortality,  
and the Fount of incorruption,  
and the Seat of the ages:

Called by all these names for us now,  
that calling on You by them  
we may come to know Your greatness,  
which at the present is invisible to us,  
but visible only to the pure,  
being manifested in Your manhood only.

*Acts of John 109; cf. ANT p.268*

Similarly, in the *Death of St John* – among other epithets – Jesus is praised as the “saving Name”:

You who alone are Jesus the Christ, the saving Name.  
You are the Life-giving Bread  
which came down from heaven for the salvation of the world.  
We bless you who have made us meet for the path of Life.

We thank you; you are the Creative Word;  
You are the Guide and the Door into grace,  
the abundant Salt, the Rich in Jewels,  
the Ear of Corn, the Life, Righteousness,  
Strength, Wisdom, the Refuge, the Repose,  
the Rest, the Vinestock, the Root, the Fountain of Life;

Who permits himself to be called by that name because of man,  
 that he might be saved and renewed  
 from the former open wickedness of his deeds  
 into which he had fallen through sin.  
 For to you belongs glory for ever and ever.

*Death of St John; cf. MAA p.57*

The “Name”, then, is used as an expression for the Creative Word of God, known, too, by many other names.

See also: **ch’áng Míng, al-Ism al-A‘zam, Nām, Shem.**

**nasīm** (A/P) Lit. breeze; a cool, gentle, fragrant breeze; mystically, a current of divine grace; hence also, the creative Power.

Ḥāfiẓ writes that “man cannot ... win the game against ... *Shayṭān*” except by the “grace of God”. Addressing the seeker as a “rose bud” yet to blossom, he says that if spiritual progress (“blossoming”) seems to have halted, the “morning hour” and the “Breath of the breeze (*nasīm*)” will help. He is referring to the divine grace that blesses early morning meditation on the spiritual Sound:

The net is tight,  
 but the grace of God becomes an ally;  
 Man cannot else win the game  
 against that outcaste, *Shayṭān*.

Tell the rose bud:  
 “Be not dismayed  
 if blossoming seems to have halted:  
 The morning hour  
 and the Breath of the breeze (*nasīm*)  
 will come to your aid.”

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.193, DHM (416:8–9) p.379, DIH p.319; cf. DHWC (417:10, 7) p.704*

See also: **bād, bād-i ṣabā.**

**nectar** See **ambrosia, Amṛit, Dew, honey, milk and honey.**

**Net** One of a family of ‘fishing’ metaphors found in religious and mystical literature. Sometimes, the Net represents the Word, being that by which the

Fisher of souls catches his fish (souls), as in a list of such terms found in the *Acts of John*:

We glorify Your Way; we glorify Your Seed, the *Logos*,  
Grace, Faith, Salt, the ineffable Pearl,  
the Treasure, the Plough, the Net,  
the Greatness, the Diadem.

*Acts of John 109; cf. ANT p.268*

The term is also used to mean the net of illusion cast by the devil to trap souls in this world.

See also: **nets** (6.2).

**Nidā'** (A/P) *Lit.* sound; hence, call, cry, voice; connotes the Muslim call to prayer; mystically, the divine Call; the mystic Voice, Sound or Word; the creative Power. Using a verb form of the word, the *Qur'ān* describes the divine Call that came to Moses, as described in the Bible:

And We called him (*nādaynāhu*)  
from the right side of Mount (Sinai),  
and made him draw near to us,  
for mystic (converse).

*Qur'ān 19:52, AYA*

Rūmī is speaking of this divine Call or Sound when he writes:

A wondrous Call (*Nidā'*) is coming:  
It is not from inside, nor from outside,  
neither from the right, nor from the left,  
neither from the rear, nor from the front.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 841:8806, KSD2 p.170, KDS1 p.342, DSTR p.136*

He says that its music is a Call or an invitation that fills the heavenly realms:

Arise! That Voice (*Bāng*) of the harp from all directions  
has created a Sound (*Ṣadā*) and a Call (*Nidā'*) in the heavens.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 255:2875, KSD1 p.160, KDS1 p.144*

He also differentiates between the call of man's lower nature, the "ghoul" or the "wolf", and the divine Call:

Have you not heard (the text):

“In the sky is your daily bread”?<sup>1</sup>

Why then have you stuck to this low place?

Deem your fear and despair to be the voice of the ghoul  
drawing your ear (down) to the abyss of degradation.

Every call (*nidā'*) that draws you upward –

know that Call (*Nidā'*) to have come from on high.

Every call (*nidā'*) that excites cupidity in you –

know that to be the howl of the wolf,

which tears men (to pieces).

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II: 1956–59; cf. MJR2 pp.321–22*

Rūmī also likens this Call from heaven to the blast of the angel *Isrāfīl*'s trumpet which calls the dead up out of their graves on the Day of Judgment. This *Nidā'* awakens the spiritually dead, calling the soul up out of the 'grave' of the body. He likens it to an eastern light, the light of dawn after dark night. Rūmī is referring to the story of Sulaymān (Solomon), who symbolizes the sage or mystic, sending a message to Bilqīs, the queen of Sabā (Sheba), who symbolizes the disciple:

When this orient light (from Sulaymān) reached Sabā,

a tumult arose in Bilqīs and her people.

All the dead spirits took wing:

the dead put forth their heads from the grave – the body.

They gave the good news to one another, saying,

“Hark! Lo, a Call (*Nidā'*) is coming from heaven.”

At that Call (*Nidā'*), religions wax great;

The leaves and boughs of the heart become green.

Like the blast of the trumpet (on Judgment Day)

that Breath from Sulaymān delivered the dead from the tombs.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV: 839–43, MJR4 p.318*

The term is also used in such expressions as *Nidā'-yi Sulṭānī* (Sound of the Emperor) and *Nidā'-yi āsmānī* (Sound from heaven).

See also: **Āvāz-i Khudā, Bāng-i āsmānī, Call, Cry, Ṣawt.**

1. *Qur'ān* 51:22.

**Nidā' al-Sulṭānī, al-** (A), **Nidā'-yi Sulṭānī** (P) *Lit.* the Sound of the Emperor (*Sulṭānī*); the Call of the Emperor, the Voice of the Emperor; the Voice or Call of God; the divine Sound; the creative Power that permeates the creation.



See also: **Āvāz-i Khudā, Nāda, Nidā’**.

**Nidā’-yi āsmānī** (P) *Lit.* Sound (*Nidā’*) of heaven (*āsmānī*); the Voice from the sky, the Voice from heaven, the Call from heaven; the celestial or divine Sound, the creative Power that creates and continually sustains all things.

See also: **Bāng-i āsmānī, Nidā’**.

**nihakshar Nām, nihachhar Nām** (H/Pu) *Lit.* without (*nih*) letter (*akshar*) Name (*Nām*); unwritten Name; the mystic Name of God; the creative Power. *Nihachhar* is a variant of *nihakshar*, used by Dariyā Sāhib of Bihar:

Sweet indeed, and beyond the three *guṇas* (attributes),  
is the unwritten Name (*nihachhar Nām*).  
It is the jewel in the crown of the *Vedas*,  
and is eternally pure.

It brings about salvation,  
and takes a soul to the immortal abode.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Gyān Ratna, Chaupāī 1540–41, DG2 p.218; cf. DSSB p.272*

The soul experiences the truth through the practice  
of the unwritten Name (*nihachhar Nām*).

*Dariyā Sāhib, Brahm Vivek, Chaupāī 41, DG2 p.332; cf. DSSB p.273*

And:

Through experience of the unwritten Name (*nihachhar Nām*)  
is true love obtained.

Darkness is removed and nectar rains from the inner sky.  
By entering the path of love, all doubts are dispelled.

The head (ego) is offered as a sacrifice,  
and you do not care what others have to say.

All the secrets of the written names  
can then be expounded.

For you have obtained the unwritten Name (*nihachhar Nām*)  
from the written ones.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Dariyā Sāgar, Chaupāī 930–33, DG2 pp.93–94; cf. DSSB p.274*

See also: **dhunātmak** (2.2), **Nām**.

**nij Nām** (H) *Lit.* own (*nij*) Name (*Nām*); inherent Name; the true, real or innermost Name; a way of distinguishing the mystic Name from outer or spoken names; the Lord's own Name; the Name of God; the divine creative power:

The primal Name (*ādi Nām*) is the root, the true essence:  
 other methods (*mantras*) are its branches.  
 Without the real Name (*nij Nām*), says Kabīr,  
 the world is drowning.

*Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Nām 4, KSS p.83*

See also: **ādi Nām, Nām, sār Shabd.**

**Nous, Nous of Light** (Gk) *Lit.* mind, intelligence, intellect, reason. In general language, *nous* refers to the kind of intelligence or discriminatory faculties that distinguish human beings from animals. But the term was used widely, and the meaning varies according to the writer and the context; sometimes 'spirit' is a more appropriate translation.

*Nous* was also used extensively by the Greek mystics and philosophers to mean the primal and divine Intelligence which lies behind and within all things. In this sense, it was sometimes qualified as the 'divine' or 'holy' *Nous*, to distinguish it from the individual *nous* of man. The divine *Nous*, equivalent to the *Logos* or Creative Word, is the divine Thought, Idea, Intelligence or Mind, by which all things come into being and are sustained in a state of order; since the creation is understood to exist by virtue of God's Thought or *Nous* – His Mind or Intelligence – *Nous* is sometimes translated as the Primal or Active Intellect, sometimes as the divine Mind and sometimes as Spirit, according to the preference of the translator.

Even as a human characteristic, a number of translators have observed that terms such as 'mind', 'intellect' and 'intelligence' used to translate *nous* are misleading. These terms conjure up images associated with human thinking processes. *Nous*, on the other hand, refers to man's intuition and consciousness, to the inner faculty that permits him to perceive the reality of things. Francis de Sales called it the "highest point of the soul",<sup>1</sup> meaning the deepest essence of man's being. In this sense, the *nous* is the attention or consciousness of the soul, the part of man which can experience mystic union.

In *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, Andrew Louth addresses this problem:

Here we come to a particular point which we shall meet in the ensuing pages, the Greek word *nous* and its derivatives. *Nous* is usually translated as 'mind' or 'intellect'. Part of the problem is that neither

of these words is as rich in derived forms as the Greek *nous*; (they have, most significantly, no verb). But beyond that, the words ‘mind’ and ‘intellect’ and their derivatives (intellection, intellectual, etc.) have quite different overtones from the Greek *nous*.... *Nous* and its derivatives have a quite different feel from our words, mind, mental, intellect, intellection, etc. Our words suggest our reasoning, our thinking; *nous*, *noēsis*, etc. suggest an almost intuitive grasp of reality....

*Nous*, then, is more like an organ of mystical union than anything suggested by our words ‘mind’ or ‘intellect’. And yet *nous* does mean mind; *noēsis* is a deeper, simpler, more contemplative form of thought, not something quite other than thinking. It is essential, therefore, to give what we might call a mystical connotation to words which normally we understand in a limited sense.

*Andrew Louth, Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition, OCM pp.xv–xvi*

Stephen MacKenna, translator of the Neo-Platonist Plotinus (c.205–270 CE), who makes extensive use of *Nous* in a deeply mystical sense, also highlights the potential for misunderstanding:

A serious misapprehension may be caused, to take one instance among several, by incautiously reading into terms used by Plotinus meanings or suggestions commonly conveyed by those words in the language of modern philosophy or religion; on the other hand, there is in places almost a certainty of missing these same religious or philosophical implications or connotations where, to the initiate, the phrase of Plotinus conveys them intensely.

Thus it is not easy, without knowledge and the training of habit, to quiver with any very real rapture over the notion of becoming ‘wholly identified with the Intellectual Principle (*Nous*)’. (But) when it is understood and at each moment deeply realized that ‘the Intellectual Principle (*Nous*)’ is the highest accessible ‘Person’ of the Godhead, is very God, is the supreme Wisdom immanent within the human soul, and yet ineffably superior to all the universe besides, then perhaps we may feel the great call to the devotion that has such a reward.

*Stephen MacKenna, Plotinus: The Enneads, PEP pp.xxx–xxxii*

As a term for the creative Intelligence or active Power of God, *Nous* appears even in the earliest Greek literature. Speaking of the unity of the One, Empedoclēs (c.490–430 BCE) writes:

He’s all one sacred ineffable Mind (*Nous*):  
by His swift thoughts encompassing the entire universe.

*Empedoclēs, Fragment 134, EHL p.116*

As a term for the mystic Power, *Nous* was used well into the Christian era. The Pythagorean, Hieroclēs, writing in the fifth century CE, says that the *Nous* is God's "Law" in creation:

What is the Law? ... The Law is the Intelligence (*Nous*) that has created all things; it is from the divine Intelligence (*Nous*) by which all has been produced from all eternity, and which likewise preserves it eternally.... The Law is the immutable Power of God.... The Law is the Power of God by which He operates and brings all things to pass immutably and from all eternity.

*Hieroclēs, Golden Verses of Pythagoras 1–2, HVP pp.6–8, 11*

The term is also found in Greek Hermetic literature, as in a passage where the individual soul is said to be illumined by the *Nous*:

HERMĒS: He (Mind, *Nous*) is the good Daemon (Power). Blessed is the soul that is most filled with Mind (*Nous*), and wretched is the soul that's empty of it....

Often, the Mind (*Nous*) leaves the soul, and at that time the soul neither sees nor understands, but is just like a thing that has no reason. Such is the power of Mind (*Nous*). For a soul without the Mind (*Nous*) "can neither speak nor act".<sup>2</sup>

*Corpus Hermeticum X:23–24, HAG p.204; cf. HAG p.205, TGH2 pp.156–57*

But, says the unknown writer, the soul must receive "initiation" before the "spiritual Light" within all things can be perceived. Here, the expression "*Nous* of *Nous* (Mind of Mind)" presumably means the highest essence of *Nous*:

It is not possible that mysteries such as these should be declared to those who are without initiation into the sacred rites. But you, lend me the ears of your mind!

There was one spiritual Light alone – no, it was a Light transcending spiritual light. He is forever the Mind (*Nous*) of Mind (*Nous*) who makes that Light to shine.

There was no other save the oneness of Himself alone. Forever in Himself alone, forever does He encompass all in His own Mind (*Nous*) – His Light and Spirit.

*Hermetic Fragment 16, in Cyril of Alexandria, Against Julianus II:35, P76 cols. 555–56a; cf. in TGH3 pp.257–58*

The term was also used by the gnostics of early Christian times, as in an invocation which equates the *Nous* with the *Logos* (Word) and the "Voice of Truth":

Father of the All, *Ennoia* (Thought) of the Light,  
*Nous* dwelling in the Heights above the (regions) below,  
 Light dwelling in the Heights,  
 Voice of Truth, upright *Nous*, untouchable *Logos*,  
 and ineffable Voice, incomprehensible Father!

*Thought of Norea 27, NHS15 pp.94–95*

In the *Teachings of Silvanus*, *Nous* is used synonymously with *Logos*. It is “this pair of friends”, says the writer, which can be relied upon to conquer the “enemies” of human imperfection:

Protect yourself lest you fall into the hands of your enemies. Entrust yourself to this pair of friends, the *Logos* and the *Nous*, and no one will be victorious over you. May God dwell in your camp (within you), may His Spirit protect your gates, and may the divine *Nous* protect the walls. Let the holy *Logos* become a torch in your mind, burning the wood which is the whole of sin.

*Teachings of Silvanus 86; cf. NHS30 pp.282–85*

The third-century Persian mystic, Mānī, also used the term extensively, equating it with the Persian term, *Vahman*, derived from the *Vohu Manō* (First or Primal Mind) of Zarathushtra (c.1500 BCE). In the *Kephalaia*, in a passage attributed to Mānī, he writes:

The First Power whom He evoked is the *Nous* of Light,  
 the Father of all Apostles, the first of all churches.

*Kephalaia I:7 p.35:21–22; cf. GVM p.20, KOT p.39*

Here, the Apostles or Messengers are the Masters, manifestations of the *Nous*. Therefore, Mānī also queries:

How does the *Nous* of Light come –  
 this great, lofty, mighty one –  
 and assume this little body of flesh?

*Kephalaia I:38, p.95:2–4; cf. GVM p.23, KOT p.99*

The third-century Plotinus (c.205–270 CE) is also a consistent user of the term in the sense of the primal, divine Intelligence. His use of *Nous* has been variously translated as Intellectual Principle (MacKenna), Spirit (Inge, Russell, Armstrong) and divine Mind (Russell, Armstrong). Armstrong often simply leaves the term as *Nous*. Plotinus speaks of the *Nous* as the First Emanation from the One. From this First Emanation emanates the Soul, and then individual souls and the world of “sense and nature”:

The One – perfect because it seeks nothing, possesses nothing and lacks nothing – overflows, so to speak, and its superabundance produces something new. This something, *Nous*, having come into being, turns back towards its Origin and is filled, and becomes the contemplator (of its Origin). The existence of something in the presence of the One is Being. Its contemplation of the One is *Nous*. But since it turns towards the One and contemplates, it is simultaneously *Nous* and Being.

Resembling the One by virtue of this contemplation, *Nous* produces in the same way, pouring forth a vast power. Just as the One which is prior to it pours forth its likeness, so what *Nous* produces is a likeness of itself.

This active Power springing from Being is Soul, which comes into being while *Nous* remains unchanged, just as *Nous*, too, comes into being while its Origin remains unchanged.

But Soul, when it produces, does not remain unchanged, for it is from its movement that its likeness is generated. By looking towards its Origin, it is filled, but it generates its likeness by adopting another, a downward movement. This likeness of Soul is sense and nature, the vegetative principle.

*Plotinus, Enneads 5:2.1; cf. PEC pp.214–15*

“Sense and nature” refer to material existence, and the “vegetative principle”, as Plotinus explains elsewhere, includes such aspects of life as “eating and procreation”.<sup>3</sup> Though complex in his manner of expression, he is essentially describing the process of emanation of the universe – both living individual souls and inert substance – from the divine One, through the medium of the *Nous*.

“Soul” is a term Plotinus uses widely as the life principle within all things. It includes the individual souls of human beings, animals and plants. It also includes a “World Soul”, an idea he adopts from Plato, which provides the order and intelligence governing the universe.<sup>4</sup> Human beings, he says, are unique in that the *Nous* is directly operative in them, while in animals and plants, it is present only as its expression through Soul. The human soul is unique in that it is directly illuminated by *Nous* and can know *Nous* by entering into it:

This light, shining within the soul, enlightens it; that is, it makes the soul spiritual; it makes it like itself, the Light above. You will come close to understanding the nature of *Nous* and the spiritual realm if you think of the rays of this Light which are present in the soul, but of more beautiful, more radiant and far greater kind. For it is this Light, lit from above, which gives light to the soul....

If anyone asks the soul concerning the nature of that perfect and all-embracing *Nous*, the primary self-knower, it has but to enter into the *Nous*, or to merge all its being into it, and immediately it will find itself in possession of those things of the *Nous*, the memory of which it has never lost and, by means of its own likeness to *Nous*, it is somehow able to perceive.

*Plotinus, Enneads 5:3.8; cf. PEC p.220*

Plotinus also defines the “achieved sage” as:

One whose existence is determined by the higher phase of the Soul...  
The active force in the sage is the *Nous*, which therefore is his presiding spirit.

*Plotinus, Enneads 3:4.6; cf. PEC p.99*

Tracing the emanative process backward to its Origin, and speaking of the spiritual ascent of the soul, Plotinus further says that when the soul is divinely possessed, it goes beyond the sphere of knowledge, experiencing not only the *Nous*, but also the One (the “Radiance”) from whom the *Nous* proceeds. To reach the One, the soul must first ascend to the *Nous*, and it is only through *Nous* that union with the One is possible. The soul, he says, is “swept away on the very crest of the wave of the *Nous* surging beneath”:

Here, we put aside all learning; disciplined to this pitch, established in beauty, the seeker still holds knowledge to be the ground he rests upon. But, suddenly, swept away on the very crest of the wave of the *Nous* surging beneath, he is lifted up and sees, not knowing how. The vision floods the sight with light. But it is not a light showing some other object: the light is itself the vision. No longer is there something seen, and light to reveal it; no longer *Nous* and object... With this (Radiance), he himself becomes identical with that Radiance whose act is to beget the *Nous*, not losing in that begetting, but remaining forever unchanged.

*Plotinus, Enneads 6:7.36; cf. PEC p.339*

Reaching that goal is illumination, and elsewhere Plotinus draws an analogy with the sun. He says that the seer and the seen are one. The light giver, the light, and that which is lit are the same. The light is from the Supreme and *is* the Supreme. To see that light is the true aim of the soul. But, he says, this is possible only by putting aside the body, the senses and desires – “to cut away everything”.<sup>5</sup>

See also: **Logos, Mind, Thought.**

1. e.g. Francis de Sales, *The Love of God* I:11–12.
2. Theognis (c.570–490 BCE), an ancient gnomic poet, v.177, in *TGH2* p.157.
3. Plotinus, *Enneads* 3:4.2.
4. Plotinus, *Enneads* 3:4.6.
5. Plotinus, *Enneads* 5:3.17.

**Nuṭq** (A/P), **Nuṭq al-Khāliq** (A), **Nuṭq-i Khāliq** (P) *Lit.* Speech (*Nuṭq*) of the Creator (*Khāliq*); the divine creative power. Rūmī says that the Speech of God is something other than human speech, and has no connection with external hearing:

There is no speech (*nuṭq*) independent of the way of hearing,  
except the Speech of the Creator (*Nuṭq-i Khāliq*)  
who is without want.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1629, MJR2 p.90*

The adjectival form of *nuṭq* is *nāṭiq* (*fem. nāṭiqah*), which means speaking, talking, endowed with the faculty of speech, endowed with reason, rational. It appears in expressions such as *al-qūwah al-nāṭiqah* (the faculty of speech). However, in Persian and Urdu, *nāṭiq* and *nāṭiqah* can also be used as nouns to mean either speech or a speaker. Mystically, like *nuṭq*, *nāṭiq* and *nāṭiqah* are used in contexts where the meaning is the Speech or Word of God, as in *al-Rūḥ al-nāṭiqah* (*lit.* the speaking Spirit, often rendered in English as the ‘rational Spirit’ and equated with the *Logos*), *al-Nafs al-nāṭiqah* (*lit.* speaking Soul, often translated as ‘Reason’), or sometimes simply *Nāṭiqah* (Speech).

Rūmī says that the *Rūḥ-i nāṭiqah* is like the running water powering a mill, while the actual speech (*nāṭiqah*) of the Saints is like the millstones being turned by that water. By the power of the water (the Water of Life, the creative Power), the millstones (external speaking) produce the ground flour of their teachings and instructions.

The Saints teach by speaking, but when people are inattentive, the water (the Water of Life) simply reverts to its channel above the mill. Rūmī is using the speech (*nāṭiqah*) of the Saints to mean both the outer speech as well as the inner, mystic Speech.

The *Kun!* (the Creative Word, “Be!”) is single, and it is this Speech of God (*Kalām Allāh*) to which Saints lead their disciples. But when reduced to speech and writing, all that remains are the two Arabic letters *kāf* (K) and *nūn* (N) which comprise the word, implying dualism and seeming disagreement. Yet all Saints seek to lead their disciples to “that place where Speech (*Kalām*) is growing without words”, that is, to direct experience of



the *Kun!* in the higher realms within. Rūmī's discourse comes after relating the story of a man who came to his friend's home and announced his presence as "I". His "Friend", a common Sufi expression for the Master, tells him to go away. When he returns, cooked in the fires of divine longing, he announces his presence as "thou".<sup>1</sup> He is no longer separate from his divine Friend:

His friend said to him,  
 "Come in, O thou who art entirely myself,  
     not different like the rose and thorn in the garden."  
 The thread has become single:  
     do not now fall into error  
     if you see that the letters K and N are two....  
 Every prophet and every Saint has a way,  
     but it leads to God:  
 All these ways are really one.

When heedlessness overtook  
     the concentration of the listener,  
     the water carried the millstones away.  
 The course of this water is above the mill:  
     its going into the mill is for your sakes.  
 Since you had no further need of the mill,  
     he (the Saint) made the water  
     flow back into the original stream.

The *Nāṭiqah* comes to the mouth  
     for the purpose of teaching;  
 Else it would not come, for truly,  
     it has a channel apart:  
 It is moving without noise and without repetitions  
     to the rose gardens "beneath which are the rivers".<sup>2</sup>

O God, reveal to the soul that place  
     where Speech (*Kalām*) is growing without words,  
     that the pure soul (*jān-i pāk*) may fly headlong  
     towards the far-stretching expanse of Nonexistence (*'Adam*)....

The divine Command "*Kun* (Be)!" was a single act,  
     and N and K occurred only in speech (*sukhun*),  
     while the inward meaning was pure and uncompounded.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3077–78, 3086–93, 3100; cf. MJR2 pp.168–69*

Mystics stress the inadequacy of speech, since all outward expressions of the mystic Reality fall far short of portraying that Reality as it is. Even so, they stress the importance of the outer speech of the Saints, for it is through their teachings, in spite of all the limitations of outward expression, that seekers are led to understand and practise the mystic path. The outward speech of the Saints is an expression of the mystic Speech of God; and although there is a teacher of the Word “in every generation”, it helps to be able to verify these teachings from the mystics of the past:

Come, speak, O my soul!  
 For the *Nāṭiqah* is digging a channel,  
     to the end that some water may reach a generation after us.  
 Although, in every generation,  
     there is one who brings the Word (*Sukhun*),  
     yet the sayings of them that have gone before are helpful.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:2537–38, MJR4 p.142*

However, this “speech (*nāṭiqah*)” has to be reined in, because a certain “concealment” is desired by God. He is alerting his reader to the fact that some things are better left unsaid. *Nāṭiqah* here means human speech:

Arise, O Zayd, and tie a shackle  
     on the *Burāq* (steed) of your speech (*nāṭiqah*).  
 Since speech (*nāṭiqah*) exposes faults,  
     it is rending the curtains of concealment.  
 Concealment is desired by God for a while.  
 Drive away this drummer, bar the road!  
 Do not gallop, draw rein:  
     it is better it be veiled;  
 It is better that everyone  
     should be kept happy by his own imagination.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3608–11; cf. MJR2 p.196*

See also: **Nāṭiq** (►2), **Speech**.

1. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* I:3056ff., *MJR2* pp.167–69.
2. *Qur’ān* 2:25.

**Oil, Oil of Gladness, Oil of Incorruption, Oil of Joy** A metaphor for the divine grace of God’s creative Power, especially in Judaic and Christian literature, also appearing in translation as Ointment, Unction or Unction of Incorruption.

Oil, being a valuable and basic subsistence food, is a common metaphor in ancient Middle Eastern literature, as are bread, water, wine and the like, all of which are employed in a variety of contexts. It was also customary to anoint the heads of respected members of the family and important guests with fragrant oils, and the tradition was also observed at the inauguration of kings. The expression thus came to be used for the anointing of the Messiah (*lit.* anointed one). In this usage, the term was often qualified as “holy Oil”, the “Oil” with which a Saviour is “anointed” being the divine Power. This variant appears in one of the biblical psalms where – according to the literary style of the times – *Yahweh* is speaking:

I have selected my servant David  
and anointed him with my holy Oil;  
My Hand will be constantly with him,  
he will be able to rely on my arm.

*Psalm 89:20–21, JB*

In another psalm, addressed to the “King”, the description given warrants the assumption that the spiritual King, the Messiah or Master, is being described:

My heart is stirred by a noble theme:  
I address my poem to the King,  
my tongue as ready as the pen of a busy scribe.

Of all men you are the most handsome,  
your lips are moist with grace,  
for God has blessed you for ever....

This is why God, your God, has anointed you  
with the Oil of Gladness, above all your rivals;  
Myrrh and aloes waft from your robes.

*Psalm 45:1, 2, 7–8, JB*

This is hardly a description of most kings in this world! The fragrance of the king’s robes alludes to the spirituality with which he is imbued. The Messiah is anointed with the “Oil of Gladness” – the divine grace of God. The well-known twenty-third psalm also speaks of being anointed with mystic oil. This time it is the devotee or disciple who is the recipient:

Thou preparest a table before me  
in the presence of mine enemies:  
Thou anointest my head with oil,  
my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life:  
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

*Psalms 23:5–6, KJV*

Again, using the metaphors of “fragrance” and the “name”, which both refer to the creative Power, the lover in the *Song of Songs* describes the divine Beloved’s mystic “Name” as an “oil”:

Delicate is the fragrance of your perfume,  
your Name is an oil poured out,  
and that is why the maidens love you.

*Song of Songs 1:3, JB*

The metaphor is also used in Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan. In the gnostic interpretation of the story, the Samaritan is the Saviour who pours “oil and wine” – the divine grace of the Word – into the wounds caused by the thieves of human imperfections. According to Luke’s version, the Good Samaritan:

went to him, and bound up his wounds,  
pouring in oil and wine,  
and set him on his own beast.

*Luke 10:34, KJV*

The gnostic writer of the *Gospel of Philip* understood the parable as an allegory concerning the Saviour or Master:

Love never calls something its own, ... it [never tries to] possess [anything]. It never says, “This is yours,” or “This is mine,” but “All these are yours.” Spiritual love is wine and fragrance. All those who anoint themselves with it take pleasure in it. While those who are anointed are present, those nearby also profit (from the fragrance). If those anointed with ointment (the Masters) withdraw from them and leave, then those not anointed, who merely stand nearby, still remain in their bad odour. The Samaritan gave nothing but wine and oil to the wounded man. It is nothing other than the (spiritual) ointment. It healed the wounds, for “love covers a multitude of sins.”<sup>1</sup>

*Gospel of Philip 77–78; cf. NHS20 pp.198–99*

In the Nag Hammadi gnostic treatise, the *Gospel of Truth*, the “Ointment is the mercy of the Father.” Elsewhere in this tractate, it is clear that by this the writer means the Word:

That is why Christ was spoken of in their midst, so that those who were disturbed might receive a bringing back, and he might anoint them with the Ointment. The Ointment is the mercy of the Father who will have mercy on them. But those whom he has anointed are the ones who have become perfect.

*Gospel of Truth 36, NHS22 pp.108–9*

In early Christian times, baptism was performed with oil as an external symbol of the Holy Spirit or Word. In an allegorical tale from the *Acts of Thomas*, a king and his brother are being baptized, but it is clear that the “Oil” in the story is of a mystic character and refers to the Creative Word, not to the outer oil. Addressing Jesus, the apostle Thomas says:

And now, at my supplication and request,  
 receive the king and his brother  
 and join them to your fold,  
 cleansing them with your washing,  
 and anointing them with your Oil  
 from the Error that surrounds them.

*Acts of Thomas 25; cf. ANT p.375*

In the early Christian, allegorical romance of *Joseph and Aseneth*, Joseph (who symbolizes the Saviour) blesses and baptizes Aseneth (the soul) with the Oil or “Unction of Incorruption”, the “Bread of Life” and the “Cup of Immortality” – all being metaphors for the Word:

Behold, from today, you will be renewed and refashioned and made alive again, and you will eat the blessed Bread of Life, and drink the blessed Cup of Immortality, and be anointed with the blessed Unction of Incorruption.

*Joseph and Aseneth 15; cf. AOT p.488, JA pp.47–48, OTP2 p.226, UWOT p.126*

Among the Mandaeans, a baptismal sect for whom oil played a significant ritualistic role, it again seems clear that the real “Oil” was that of the purifying Word, and the metaphor of oil is found extensively in their literature. In a poem which describes the coming to this world of the mythical Saviour, *Mandā-ḡ-Hiia*, the poet speaks of “Wisdom” as the “Springs of Life” that the Saviour brings from the “house of Life”:

You were established, First Life:  
 You were in existence before all things.  
 Before You no being existed....

You enlarge our steps and lift our eyes heavenwards.  
 You descend and give us dwellings by Springs of Life.  
 You pour into us and fill us  
     with Your Wisdom, Your Doctrine and Your goodness.  
 You show us the way  
     by which You came from the house of Life;  
 And we will walk therein  
     with the gait of righteous and believing men;  
 So causing our spirits and souls  
     to dwell in the dwellings of Life.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 24; cf. CPM p.20*

The poet then identifies these divine blessings with the “Oil with which he anointed”:

This is the Oil with which he anointed,  
     the radiance, light and glory  
     which *Mandā-ḏ-Hiia* blessed with his pure mouth,  
     and bestowed on all who love his Name of Truth.

From all those who are anointed with this Oil,  
     every pain, disease, complaint ...  
     and physical evil will be removed....  
 Every man anointed with this Oil will be sinless  
     and blameless in the place of Life.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 24; cf. CPM pp.20–21*

*Mandā-ḏ-Hiia* (lit. *Gnosis* of Life) is both the Word and its manifestation as the living Knowledge or *Gnosis*, the living Wisdom, the living Saviour. “Wisdom” and the “Springs of Life” are the “Oil with which he anointed” – baptized or initiated – his chosen souls, those who love the true, mystic Name of God. Those who receive this mystic baptism are freed from bondage to the physical form and its consequent ills – the pains, diseases and problems of life here.

Similarly, in a text which was used in Mandaean ritual, yet clearly incorporates an earlier layer of more mystical teaching or has captured the essence of its meaning, the “Oil” is eulogized as the panacea for all ills, the conqueror of destiny, and the bringer of eternal life:

Precious Oil are you, son of white sesame,  
     son of the Euphrates bank, son of the river garden,  
     son of water pools, son of treasures of light.

Upon you, Oil, Life laid His hand,  
 and sent you to this world which is all birth (and death),  
 to heal, uplift, raise up  
 and ameliorate all pains, diseases, complaints, tumours  
 and the seven mysteries (powers of destiny)  
 that inhabit the body....

*Mandaean Prayer Book 23; cf. CPM p.19*

The Saviour concludes:

The Oil with which I anointed, which I bestowed,  
 is ... given as the Name and Sign  
 of a living, glorious, flourishing and steadfast race.  
 Any man anointed by this Oil will live,  
 be whole and be strengthened.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 23, CPM p.19*

The “Oil” which is “bestowed” – giving life, strength and spiritual wholeness – is the Holy Spirit. It is “given” in the Saviour’s own “Name” – the “Sign”, the living Word of a living Saviour – to the living, chosen ones.

1. *1 Peter* 4:8.

## Ointment See Oil.

**Om** (S/H) A symbol used for the Sound that emanates from *Brahm* or *Brahman*, the absolute Reality of the *Upanishads*, the deep reverberations of which are said to resemble the intonation of the word *Om*; also spelled *Aum*. The mystic sound of *Om* has also been equated with the *Pranava* (*lit.* that which resounds) and *Udgītha* (*lit.* upward Song) of the *Vedas*.

*Om* is used as a word of solemn affirmation and respectful assent, sometimes translated as ‘yes’, ‘verily’, ‘so be it’. In this context, it compares to some extent with Amen. It is used extensively in prayers, religious ceremonies and recitations from the *Vedas*. Its repetition as a *mantra* is believed to ensure retention of the knowledge gained and protection of the devotee against error and misfortune, and to effect concentration of the mind which can lead to bliss.

In Sanskrit, ‘O’ is a diphthong, contracted from ‘A’ and ‘U’, which, when pronounced quickly, have the sound of ‘O’. ‘O’ when combined with ‘M’ gives a resonant, humming sound. Various symbolic interpretations have

been given to the three letters ‘A’, ‘U’, ‘M’. In the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad*, the letter ‘A’ represents *Vaishvānara*, the state of waking souls in the waking world; ‘U’ represents *Taijasa*, the state of the dreaming souls in the world of dreams; and ‘M’ represents *Prajñā*, the state of the sleeping and undreaming souls. The undifferentiated sound M-M-M which follows the utterance of these three letters is *turīya*, the fourth state of transcendental consciousness.<sup>1</sup> It is also said that the three sounds A-U-M represent the three *Vedas* (*Rig*, *Yajur* and *Sāma*) and the three main Hindu deities (*Brahmā*, *Vishṇu* and *Shiva*).

Though the word itself is uttered like any other human word, it has come to be regarded as the *bīj* (seed) *mantra* from which all other *mantras* have been born. This would seem to be a misunderstanding of the mystic character of *Om*. As a verbalized expression, it is only a symbol representing, in *Vedānta* and Hindu thought, both *nirguṇa Brahman* (the Vedantic Absolute) and the *saguṇa Brahman* (the creator-god). The real Sound that it represents is nonverbal – the Creative Word heard at the level of *Brahman*.

The *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad* makes it clear that *Om* is a mystic reality. It is present within everything, and everything is derived from *Om*. *Om* is everything that exists in time, as well as that which is beyond time:

*Om*, the Word, is all this (*i.e.* the entire universe). A further explanation is this: all that is past, present and future is indeed *Om*. And whatever else there is, beyond the threefold division of time – that indeed also is *Om*.

*Māṇḍūkya Upanishad 1*

In more recent times, Paramhansa Yogānanda has written of the *Om* as the divine creative power, equating it with the Word or Holy Ghost of the New Testament:

*Om*, the Word or Holy Ghost, the divine invisible Power ... is the only doer, the sole causative, activating force that upholds all creation through vibration. *Om* the blissful Comforter is heard in meditation, and reveals to the devotee the ultimate Truth.... Nature is an objectification of *Om*, the primal Sound or vibratory Word....

The sage Patañjali, foremost exponent of *yoga*, ... wrote: “*Kriyā yoga* consists of body discipline, mental control and meditating on *Om*.”<sup>2</sup> Patañjali speaks of God as the actual cosmic Sound of *Om* heard in meditation. *Om* is the Creative Word, the Sound of the vibratory motor. Even the *yoga* beginner soon inwardly hears the wondrous Sound of *Om*. Receiving this blissful spiritual encouragement, the devotee becomes assured that he is in actual touch with divine realms....



Through the divine eye in the forehead, the yogi sails his consciousness into omnipresence, hearing the Word or *Om*, divine Sound of many waters or vibrations which are the sole reality of creation.

*Paramhansa Yogānanda, Autobiography of a Yogi, AY pp.129 (n.1), 140, 202–3, 226*

He also speaks of this Sound as the Music of the Spheres described by the Greek philosophers:

Astral beings enjoy the ethereal Music of the Spheres, and are entranced by the sight of all creation as exhaustless expressions of changing light.

*Shrī Yukteshwar, in Autobiography of a Yogi, AY p.344*

Some Indian mystics have said that *Om* is not the sound of the highest spiritual realm, but that of the second spiritual region, the realm of the universal mind, also called *trikuṭī*. Hence, Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh speaks of hearing the sound of *Om* in this region, *bank nāl* (the crooked tunnel) being the transition between the realm below, known as *sahans dal kanwal* (the thousand-petalled lotus), and *trikuṭī*:

*Bank nāl* I will penetrate with ease:  
on reaching *trikuṭī*, I will realize *Om*.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 4:5.6, SBP p.40*

And:

On passing through *bank nāl*, I entered *trikuṭī*.  
I heard there the reverberating sound of *Om*,  
and saw the red sun.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 5:3.10–11, SBP p.45*

1. *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad* 8–12.
2. Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* 2:1.

**Onkāra(a)** (S/H/Pu), **Om̐kāra** (H/Pu) *Lit.* the sound of *Om*, the syllable *Om*; used synonymously with *Om* in the *Upanishads* and by various yogic paths to represent the absolute *Brahman*; also, the creative Sound (*Om*) which emanates from *Brahman*; also, a name given by a number of Indian Saints to the ruler of the second spiritual realm, which they have equated with *Brahman*; regarded as the most sacred word of the *Vedas*, and hence commonly used by yogis as a *mantra*.

*Kāra* is a suffix that can be added to any Sanskrit syllable in order to give it a name, conferring the meaning, ‘the sound of’ or ‘the syllable of’. Because it is a name, *Onkār* can also be the name of a deity.

*Onkār* or *Om*, however, is much more than a symbol or an external sound. It is an emanation of the power of *Onkār*, the lord of *trikuṭī*, the region of the universal mind and the second spiritual region according to a number of Indian mystics. It is a Power whose sound can actually be heard when the attention is turned within and rises to that level. Hence, Kabīr writes:

*Trikuṭī* is the source of knowledge,  
where thunder resounds like a big drum,  
and the light of the red sun glows brightly.  
There you will find the four-petalled lotus  
from which the ceaseless sound of *Onkār* arises.

*Kabīr, Shabdāvālī 1, Bhed Bānī 22:15, KSS1 p.66*

Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh writes in a very similar manner,<sup>1</sup> while Guru Nānak speaks more generally, using *Onkār* to mean the one Lord who is the source of everything. He is the source of the *Vedas*, the creator of the three worlds comprising creation according to Hindu mythology; He is the salvation and place of rest for holy souls:

*Brahmā* was created through the one Lord (*Onkār*):  
that *Brahmā* cherished the one Lord (*Onkār*) in the mind.  
It is from the one Lord (*Onkār*) that mountains and ages have emanated;  
It is the Lord (*Onkār*) who created the *Vedas*;  
It is through the one Lord (*Onkār*) that the world is saved;  
It is through the Lord (*Onkār*)  
that the God-conscious beings are emancipated;  
Hear thou the account of the imperishable Lord (*Om*),  
worthy of obeisance:  
the eternal Lord (*Om*) is the essence of the three worlds (*tribhavaṇ*).

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 929–30, MMS*

See also: **Ekankār** (2.1), **Onkār** (2.1, 4.2), **trikuṭī** (4.1).

1. Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, *Sār Bachan Poetry* 26:2.1–3, *SBP* p.226.

**Only-begotten** (Gk. *Monogenēs*), **Only-begotten One**, **Only-begotten Son** A term known to most people only from its occurrence in John’s gospel, but actually used extensively in early Christian and gnostic literature.

In Christianity, it is generally understood that the man Jesus was the Only-begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary. However, this is not the way it is used in much of the literature of early Christianity. The Greek term translated as 'Only-begotten' is *Monogenēs*, which is perhaps more accurately rendered as 'begotten of one' or 'alone-begotten'. In many instances, the term is used in reference to the first emanation of God, that is, the Creative Word. In these contexts, it is thus the Word itself which is the "Only-begotten Son". Jesus was referred to as the "Only-begotten Son" only inasmuch as he was a personification of the Word. Moreover, the epithet is not an allusion to the virgin birth, which is never mentioned in John's gospel. John's use of the expression is intended to convey the spiritual meaning of the term.

This meaning is brought out clearly in the literature of early Christian times. In the Nag Hammadi tractate, the *Apocryphon of John*, for instance, Jesus explains that the Father

begot a spark of light with a light resembling blessedness.... This was an Only-begotten One ... who had come forth. He is His only off-spring, the Only-begotten One of the Father, the pure Light.

*Apocryphon of John 6, NHS33 p.41*

In an untitled gnostic treatise from the *Bruce Codex*, the matter is made even clearer. There, the Son is described as the "Only-begotten *Logos*".<sup>1</sup> Speaking of the many powers and realms in creation, the same text also says that they emanate from the "Only-begotten One":

Now all these powers surround the Only-begotten One,  
like a crown.

*Untitled Text 236:7; cf. BC pp.234–35*

Adding:

It is he (the Only-begotten One) who came forth  
from the endless, characterless, formless  
and self-begotten One (God) who has begotten Himself.

(It is he) who came forth  
from the ineffable and immeasurable One,  
who exists verily and truly.

It is he within whom exists the truly existent One.

That is to say, the incomprehensible Father  
exists in His Only-begotten Son....

This is the Creative Word (*Logos*) which commands the All  
(the realms of creation) that they should operate....

This is he to whom the creation prays as God,

and as Lord, and as Saviour,  
 and as the one to whom they are submitted.  
 This is he at whom the All marvels  
 because of his beauty and comeliness, ... saying ...  
 “You are existent, you are the Only-begotten One,  
 the light and the life and the grace.”

*Untitled Text 237–38:7; cf. BC pp.236–39*

Later Christians also understood the Only-begotten Son to be the Word. John of the Cross, for instance, speaks of

His Wisdom, whereby He created them (all souls),  
 which is the Word, His Only-begotten Son.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle V:1, CWJC2 p.210*

The Only-begotten One and the Only-begotten Son are thus synonyms for the Creative Word, the *Logos*, Wisdom and so on. However, the Saviour or Master, as an incarnation of this Only-begotten Power, was also called the Son. This understanding clarifies the occurrence of the term in John’s gospel:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,  
 (and we beheld his glory,  
 the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father),  
 full of grace and truth.

*John 1:14, KJV*

His “glory” refers to the glory of the Word, of the “Only-begotten of the Father” having come into the flesh as a Saviour. John’s gospel continues:

Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.  
 For the law was given by Moses,  
 but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.  
 No man hath seen God at any time;  
 The Only-begotten Son,  
 which is in the bosom of the Father,  
 he hath declared him.

*John 1:16–18, KJV*

The “grace and truth” of this Word, says the unknown writer, has been received by them through Jesus Christ. However, the “law” – the same teaching – was previously given by Moses. He then adds that no one has “seen God at any time” unless through the grace of the Only-begotten Son – through the Word of God. Later in John’s gospel, Jesus again says:

No man hath ascended up to heaven,  
 but he that came down from heaven,  
 even the Son of man which is in heaven....

For God so loved the world,  
 that he gave his Only-begotten Son,  
 that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,  
 but have everlasting life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world:  
 but that the world through him might be saved.

He that believeth on him is not condemned:  
 but he that believeth not is condemned already,  
 because he hath not believed  
 in the Name of the Only-begotten Son of God.

*John 3:13, 16–18, KJV*

Characteristic of John's gospel, the meaning is intentionally ambiguous. This was the writer's style, employing frequent wordplays and so on that are difficult to convey in translation. He means that no person can reach heaven without the help of a Son of man who came down from heaven. For God has such love for the souls in this world that his Only-begotten Son incarnates again and again, not to condemn the world – because everybody is already condemned by their sins simply by being here – but so that the people of the world "might be saved". And he reiterates that only those who believe in the Name of the Only-begotten Son of God, in the Word or mystic Name, are not condemned.

See also: **First-born Son, Son of God** (►2).

1. *Untitled Text* 231:4, *BC* pp.224–25.

**otaprota** (S), **otprot** (H), **otpot** (Pu) *Lit.* sewn crosswise (*ota*) and lengthwise (*prot*, *pot*); an idiom meaning extending in all directions, the warp and woof; hence, fully intermingled, permeated, interpenetrated, soaked, saturated, interwoven; mystically, descriptive of God who permeates the entire creation through His creative Power:

He (God) is omnipresent:  
 He is the warp and woof (*otaprota*) of the entire creation.

*Yajur Veda* 32:8

In the *Upanishads*, this Power is called (among other names), *Om*. *Om*, says the *Maitrī Upanishad*, is the “warp and woof (*otaprotā*)” of creation:

There are, indeed, two forms of *Brahman*:  
 the formed and the formless.  
 Now, that which is the formed is unreal,  
 that which is the formless is the real;  
 That is truly *Brahman* ...  
 that came to have *Om* as its self (*ātman*).  
 He divided Himself threefold,  
 for *Om* consists of three letter-sounds: *a-u-m*.  
 By means of these,  
 everything we see (*sarvam idaṃ*, lit. all this) is woven,  
 warp and woof (*otaprotā*), across Him.

*Maitrī Upanishad 6:3*

Many other mystics have said the same:

*Shabd* (Word) itself is the cause, and is itself the effect.  
 It is *Shabd* that has brought about the entire show.  
 It is *Shabd* and *Shabd* alone that is interwoven throughout (*otpot*).  
 Whether high or low, it is *Shabd*.  
*Shabd* is the Master and *Shabd* is also the disciple.  
*Shabd* itself is the knower of the secrets of all hearts.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:3.8, 13–14, SBP p.89*

Everything is the Lord (*Gobind*), everything is the Lord (*Gobind*):  
 there is nothing but God (*Gobind*), the world Sustainer.  
 As one thread holds hundreds and thousands of beads,  
 so is that Lord in warp and woof (*otpot*).

*Nāṃdev, Ādi Granth 485, MMS*

As the light of the sun’s rays is diffused,  
 so the Lord is contained in every heart like warp and woof (*otpot*).

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1177, MMS*

**pañch Shabd** (H/Pu) *Lit.* the five (*pañch*) Sounds (*Shabd*); the five Melodies; the Sound Current as it passes through the five main realms of creation, as described by Indian Saints. Though the *Shabd*, the Word or Sound Current is one, it is heard as different sounds as it ‘passes through’ and enlivens the five main regions or levels of creation, called by some Indian mystics *sahans dal kanwal*, *trikuṭī*, *daswān dwār*, *bhanwar guphā* and *sach khaṇḍ*.

Mahārāj Charan Singh explains:

The seat of *Shabd* lies within the human body. The celestial Sound emerges from *sach khaṇḍ* and resounds at the eye focus in all human beings. We have to join our consciousness with it, and reach our (spiritual) home by traversing one stage after the other. This divine Sound is actually one, but as it passes through five regions, it has been called five Sounds by various Saints. It is just like the water in a river. The water is one, but it makes different sounds when it originates in the mountains, when it passes through ravines and gullies, when it plunges down in waterfalls, when it flows through the plains, and finally when it joins the sea. Even so is God's Word, the Audible Life Stream, given names in accordance with the regions through which it passes and its nature in each region.

*Mahārāj Charan Singh, Spiritual Discourses 9, SD1 p.120*

Other mystics have also spoken of these five Sounds:

He is the supreme Lord:

five thunderous Sounds (*pañch Shabd*) are His insignia.

*Bhāi Gurdās, Vārān 7:5*

On transcending the five *tattvas* (elements, *i.e.* the body),  
you are welcomed by five beautiful Sounds (*pañch Shabd*).

*Bhāi Gurdās, Vārān 29:6*

The celestial Strain of the five musical instruments  
(*pañch Shabd anāhad*, the five unstruck Sounds)  
resounds within me, and I abide ever with the Lord of the world.

O formless and detached Lord,

Thy slave Kabīr performs such a worship of Thine.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 1350, MMS*

See also: **Five Trees, nawbah** (3.2).

**payām** (P) *Lit.* a message. In Sufi writings, *payām* indicates the divine message, a good and glad 'message' regarding the return of the soul to God. The one who brings the message is the Messenger (*Rasūl*) or prophet or Saint of God. In traditional Islam, the Messenger is Muḥammad.

For the religious, God's message is contained in the holy scriptures. But for the mystic, God's message is the Speech of God (*Kalām Allāh*), the Command (*Amr*), the Order (*Ḥukm*), the Call from the sky (*Bāng-i āsmānī*).

Rūmī says that that Message is heard within oneself, with the help of the “Prophet of good Message”. He is referring to Muḥammad who, according to a frequently quoted *ḥadīth* (traditional saying), advised: “Die before you die”<sup>1</sup> – go through the process of death while still living in the body:

The Prophet of good Message (*Payām*)

said by way of intimation:

“Die before you die,” O noble ones.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:754; cf. MJR6 p.300*

Using the term in a more general sense, Ḥāfiẓ, addressing the divine “dawn wind” (the Spirit), speaks of the soul’s longing for a “message” from the divine “Friend”:

O dawn wind! Should you happen

to pass by the land of the Friend,

bring a fragrant waft of air

from the perfumed tresses of the Friend.

By my soul, I will surrender my life (ego) in thanks,

if you bring me but a message (*payām*) from the Friend.

And if, by chance, you have no access to that presence,

bring a little dust for mine eye (as collyrium)

from the door of the Friend.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.37, DHM (73:1–3) p.98, DIH p.90; cf. DHWC (31:1–3) p.87*

See also: **mūtū qabla an tamūtū** (►2).

1. *Ḥadīth*, AMBF 352, in *Maṣnavī VI:722* (heading), *MJR6* p.298.

**pearl** Metaphorically, something of value; used mystically, either generally to depict man’s spiritual goal or quest or, specifically, for the creative Power. Thus, Jesus speaks of the “pearl of great price”:

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man,

seeking goodly pearls:

Who, when he had found one pearl of great price,

went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

*Matthew 13:45–46, KJV*

A spiritual seeker, he says, is like a merchant in search of valuable pearls. But when he finds one of a value and quality surpassing everything he has, he relinquishes everything else in his efforts to obtain it. Just so, when a



person finds the path that leads to the spiritual pearl within himself, then nothing becomes too much trouble in the pursuit of that goal. As the same parable appears in the *Gospel of Thomas*:

Jesus said,  
 “The kingdom of the Father is like a merchant  
   who had a consignment of merchandise  
   and who discovered a pearl.  
 That merchant was shrewd.  
 He sold the merchandise,  
   and bought the pearl alone for himself.  
 You, too, seek His unfailing and enduring treasure,  
   where no moth comes near to devour, and no worm destroys.”  
*Gospel of Thomas 46:76, NHS20 pp.80–83*

As a metaphor, it has achieved popularity because a pearl is held to be a thing of great beauty and value. But to obtain one, either a great price must be paid or considerable effort must be made by diving down to the sea bed. Both signify the spiritual effort required to gain the spiritual pearl. The price to be paid is the complete abnegation of the sense of ego and individuality.

In the *Acts of John*, there is a list of terms for the creative Power, all of which allude to the parables and sayings of Jesus. Here, it is called the “ineffable Pearl”:

We glorify Your Way; we glorify Your Seed, the *Logos*,  
 Grace, Faith, Salt, the ineffable Pearl,  
 the Treasure, the Plough, the Net,  
 the Greatness, the Diadem.

*Acts of John 109; cf. ANT p.268*

One of the best known uses of the metaphor is in the allegorical poem, the *Robe of Glory*. Here the soul, symbolized as a prince, is sent out from his divine and royal home to seek a pearl (the Word) which is guarded in Egypt (the physical realm) by a serpent (Satan, the negative power, the mind) which never sleeps. The prince’s divine parents tell him:

If you go down into Egypt,  
   and bring back thence the one pearl,  
   which is in the midst of the sea,  
   hard by the loud-breathing serpent,  
 then you shall again put on your bright robe  
   and your toga, which is laid over it.

*Robe of Glory 12–14, Acts of Thomas IX; cf. AAA p.239, ANT pp.411–12, HS pp.12–13*

While waiting for the restless serpent to sleep, however, the prince himself falls asleep:

I forgot that I was a son of kings,  
     and I served their king;  
 And I forgot the pearl,  
     for which my parents had sent me.  
 And by reason of the heaviness of their food,  
     I fell into a deep sleep.

*Robe of Glory 33–35, Acts of Thomas IX; cf. AAA p.240, ANT p.412, HS pp.16–17*

Consequently, the prince has to be rescued by his divine Brother (the Saviour), sent by their parents from on High. The Brother is the bearer of a Letter (the Word) which reads, metaphorically:

Call to mind that you are a son of kings!  
 See the slavery – and whom you serve!  
 Remember the pearl  
     for which you were sent to Egypt!

*Robe of Glory 44–45, Acts of Thomas IX; cf. AAA p.241, ANT p.413, HS pp.18–19*

So the prince – the soul – awakens, and lulling the serpent to sleep (by means of the mystic Name), he snatches up the pearl and returns to his spiritual home. On hearing the words of the mystic Letter, he relates:

I remembered that I was a son of kings,  
     and my free soul longed for its natural state.  
 I remembered the pearl,  
     for which I had been sent to Egypt.  
 And I began to charm him,  
     the terrible loud-breathing serpent.

I hushed him to sleep and lulled him to slumber  
     by naming the Name of my Father upon him,  
     and the name of our next in rank,  
     and of my Mother, the Queen of the East.  
 And I snatched away the pearl,  
     and turned to go back to my Father's house.

*Robe of Glory 56–61, Acts of Thomas IX; cf. AAA p.242, ANT p.413, HS pp.20–23*

The pearl is a common metaphor in allegorical stories or parables, and there are a number of other such stories in the early Christian and allied

literature. But the earliest known occurrence of the allegory is probably in the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, dating from the fourth millennium BCE. There, Gilgamesh, the semidivine hero, goes in search of immortality and acquires the Herb of Life, but is subsequently robbed of it by a serpent when he goes to bathe.

Gilgamesh had found the Herb of Life at the bottom of the sea. And though, in the extant variants of the epic story, it is not identified as a pearl, the motif of a serpent guarding a pearl appears on pottery of the period, together with the Tree of Life and the river of Living Water running from its roots, as in the later garden of Eden story in *Genesis*.

The pearl is also used specifically to symbolize the soul.

See also: **Diadem, jewels, pearl** (5.1).

**perfume** See **Fragrance**.

**Plant of Life** A Sumerian or early Mesopotamian variant of the Tree of Life.

See **Tree of Life**.

**pneuma** (Gk) *Lit.* wind, breath, spirit; used in various wordplays by Greek mystical writers. The same spread of meaning is found to some extent in its English derivatives. The word 'pneumatic', for example, means 'of the air' as well as 'of the spirit'. The Hebrew word *ruah* has the same spread of meaning, and similar terms are found in other Semitic languages.

*Pneuma* is the breath which determines the presence of physical life. Normally, when a person stops breathing for anything but the briefest of periods, he dies. It is the simplest means of determining whether or not a person is still alive. Likewise, it is the Spirit which brings life to a human form. The soul is a drop of the Spirit. In its essence, the soul is pure Spirit, a part of God. When the soul takes up residence in a body, there is said to be life. When the same soul departs, then death immediately ensues. The real individual and the real life is the soul, the particle of Spirit.

See also: **Living Air, prāṇa** (5.1), **ruah** (5.1), **wind**.

**pomegranate** See **Tree of Life**.

**Power, Power of God, First Power, great Power, perfect Power** Power is the ability and capacity to do something; a power is something which has this capacity. One of the characteristic themes of gnostic writings is the divine creative power (Gk. *dynamis*), portrayed in a number of allegorical ways, together with a multitude of lesser powers (*archons*) in creation, the lower powers being derived from the powers ‘above’. Some of the gnostic texts describe a complex hierarchy of powers whose description can be almost impossible to follow.

In a few instances, the highest God Himself is called the Power, as in the gnostic text *The Concept of Our Great Power*, where the Divine is known throughout as “our Great Power”, and is described as the “Power, who is exalted above all powers, the immeasurable, the universal One”<sup>1</sup> and “O Power who art above all powers”.<sup>2</sup>

Terms with the same meanings are found in a variety of languages in many early Christian and other Middle Eastern writings of that period. In the Christian gospels, for instance, the term appears in the doxology ending the Lord’s prayer:

For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power (*dynamis*) and the glory, for ever.

*Matthew 6:13, KJV*

The meaning of this verse is usually taken in a general way, and that may indeed be the sense originally intended. Nevertheless it is not impossible that the “power” referred to here is the creative Power, also called the Creative Word. Certainly, in a description of Jesus appearing in the early Christian book, the *Acts of Thomas*, the Holy Spirit is referred to as “your own Power”:

(You) who breathe your own Power (*Dynamis*) into us,  
and encourage us and give us confidence  
in love to your own servants.

*Acts of Thomas 81; cf. ANT p.401*

In a similar vein, the gnostic *Teachings of Silvanus* identifies “Christ” with a number of terms used for the creative Power, once again including the “Power (*Dynamis*)” among them:

For the Tree of Life is Christ. He is Wisdom. For he is Wisdom; he is also the Word (*Logos*); he is the Life, the Power (*Dynamis*) and the Door. He is the Light, the Angel and the good Shepherd. Entrust yourself to this one who became all for your sake.

*Teachings of Silvanus 106, NHS30 pp.336–37*

Some of the gnostic texts are even more explicit. In *Allogenes*, it says that “the Power appeared by means of an activity that is at rest and silent, although it uttered a sound.”<sup>3</sup>

The *Apocryphon of John*, spinning out a complex hierarchy of divine creative powers, nevertheless speaks of “the Father, the Mother and the Son – the perfect Power”.<sup>4</sup> The creative Power is also described as proceeding from the divine Thought, and is identified as the “Image” – another term for the creative Power:

And [His Thought became] manifest and she came forth.... This is the first [Power which was] before the All (the creation) and which came forth from His mind.... the [perfect] Power which is the Image of the Invisible, Virginal Spirit who is Perfect.

*Apocryphon of John 4; cf. NHS33 pp.31, 33*

In the Hermetic text, the *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth*, Hermēs Trismegistus, as the Master and personification of the supreme Father, tells his disciple that he has “received the Spirit through the Power”, also adding, “I gave birth to it (the Power), as children are born.”<sup>5</sup> He also describes it as, “the Power which is light”, “the Power that is above all powers, the one that has no beginning”.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the disciple begs, “Lord, grant us a wisdom from your Power that reaches us.”<sup>7</sup>

Manichaean texts also use the term. One of the Coptic psalms says: “The Power of God that supports the universe is the Son.”<sup>8</sup> Here, the Son is the primal emanation of the Father – the creative Power.

Similar terms are found in Jewish mystical writings. In the *Wisdom of Solomon*, where the creative Power is known primarily as Wisdom, “she” is also described as the “Power of God” and “God’s active Power”:

For Wisdom is quicker to move than any motion;  
She is so pure she pervades and permeates all things.  
She is a Breath of the Power (*Dynamis*) of God....  
untarnished mirror of God’s active Power (*Dynamis*).

*Wisdom of Solomon 7:24–26, JB*

Likewise, the *Ẓaddik* or Teacher of Righteousness, who is generally presumed to have written the beautiful psalms among the Dead Sea Scrolls, says:

Thou hast created the earth by Thy Power,  
and the seas and deeps by Thy might.  
Thou hast fashioned all their inhabitants  
according to Thy Wisdom;

And hast appointed all that is in them  
according to Thy will.

*Thanksgiving Hymns IX:10–15 (6), CDSS p.253*

One of the most interesting discourses on the creative Power of God from ancient times comes in a Greek text, *On the Cosmos*, attributed to Aristotle, but normally presumed in modern times to have been written by another hand. Here, the divine “Power” is depicted as a sound or harmony which is responsible for the “order (*kosmos*)” in all things. This one First Cause is likened to a “chorusmaster” who makes one harmony out of a multiplicity of voices:

His Power (*Dynamis*), penetrating the whole of the cosmos, moves the sun and moon and turns the whole of the heavens, and is the cause of preservation (sustenance) for the things upon the earth....

The single harmony that is produced by all these as they sing and dance in concert round the heavens has one and the same beginning and one and the same end, in a true sense giving to the whole the name of ‘order (*kosmos*)’ and not ‘disorder (*akosmia*)’. Just as in a chorus, at the direction of the leader, all the chorus of men, sometimes of women too, join in singing together, creating a single pleasing harmony with their varied mixture of high and low notes, so also is the case of the God who controls the universe. The note is sounded from on high by Him who might well be called the chorusmaster. Then the stars and the whole heavens move continually, and the all-shining sun makes his double journey, dividing night from day from his rising and his setting, and bringing the four seasons of the year as he moves forwards to the north and back to the south.

There are rains in due season, and winds, and falls of dew, and all the phenomena that occur in the atmosphere – all are the result of the first, original Cause. These are followed by the springing up of rivers, the swelling of the sea, the growth of trees, the ripening of fruit, the birth of animals, the nurture, the prime and the decay of all things. And the individual constitution of each thing contributes to the process, as I have said.

So when the Leader and Author of all things, unseen except to the eye of meditation (*logismos*), gives the sign to every moving thing between heaven and earth, everything is moved continually in its orbit and within its peculiar limits, now disappearing, now appearing, revealing innumerable different forms and concealing them again, all from a single beginning.

*Pseudo-Aristotle, On the Cosmos 6:398b–399a; cf. SCC pp.390–97*

The creative Power is also likened to the sound of a war trumpet at whose sound all the different soldiers prepare for their separate tasks in one integrated army:

The process is very like what happens particularly at moments in a war, when the trumpet gives a signal in a military camp. Then each man hears the sound, and one picks up his shield, another puts on his breastplate, and a third his greaves or helmet or belt. One harnesses his horse, one mounts his chariot, one passes on the watchword. The company commander goes at once to his company, the brigadier to his brigade, the cavalryman to his squadron, and the infantryman runs to his own station. All is stirred by a single trumpeter to a flurry of motion according to the orders of the supreme commander.

It is a similar idea that we must have of the universe: by a single inclination all things are spurred to action and perform their peculiar functions – and this single Agent is unseen and invisible.

*Pseudo-Aristotle, On the Cosmos 6:399a–b, SCC pp.396–97*

All things, says the unknown writer, are ordered and maintained in working harmony by the Power of God. It is, he says, “an ancient idea”. God’s uncreated, infinite “Essence” is also distinguished from the “Power” through which He is present in His creation, creating and preserving all things:

It is indeed an ancient idea, traditional among all mankind, that all things are from God and are constituted for us by God, and nothing is self-sufficient if deprived of His preserving influence. So some of the ancients were led to say that all things of this world are full of gods, all that are presented to us through our eyes and hearing and all the senses. But, in saying this, they used terms suitable to the Power (*Dynamis*) of God, but not to His Essence.

For God is indeed the preserver of all things and the creator of everything in this cosmos, however it is brought to fruition. But He does not take upon Himself the toil of a creature that works and labours for itself, but uses an indefatigable Power (*Dynamis*), by means of which He controls even things that seem a great way off.

God has His home in the highest and first place, and is called supreme for this reason, since according to the poet (Homer), it is on “the loftiest crest”<sup>9</sup> of the whole heaven that He dwells.

*Pseudo-Aristotle, On the Cosmos 6:397b, SCC pp.384–87*

1. *Concept of Our Great Power* 47, *NHS11* pp.320–21.
2. *Concept of Our Great Power* 47, *NHS11* pp.322–23.
3. *Allogenēs* 53, *NHS28* pp.208–9.

4. *Apocryphon of John* 9; cf. *NHS33* p.55.
5. *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* 52, *NHS11* pp.346–47.
6. *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* 57–58, *NHS11* pp.358–59.
7. *Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth* 56, *NHS11* pp.356–57.
8. *Manichaeon Psalm Book*, *MPB* p.116; cf. also *MPB* p.186.
9. Homer, *Iliad* I:499.

**Praṇav(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* that which resounds; hence, that which can be heard; from *praṇu* (to roar, to resound, to reverberate); used in the *Upanishads* and *Vedas* for *Om*, as the primal, creative Sound. In the *Rig Veda* it is called *Praṇava*, while the *Sāma Veda* calls it the *Udgītha* (*lit.* upward Song). But the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, a part of the *Sāma Veda*, points out in its very first verse that the two are the same. Everything happens through the force of this great Power, says the writer. Even the sun in the sky is moved by the power of the Sound – the *Praṇava* or *Om*. Indeed, the sun *is* the *Praṇava*, as is everything else:

Truly, that which is the *Udgītha* is the *Praṇava*,  
and the *Praṇava* is the *Udgītha*.

The *āditya* (sun) in truth is the *Udgītha*.

It is the *Praṇava*, for as it moves it utters “*Om*”.

*Chhāndogya Upanishad* 1:5.1

In the *Upanishads*, *Om*, *Praṇava* and *Udgītha* refer to the same creative Sound. In one of the yogic texts, the *Shiva Saṃhitā*, the writer speaks of rising up through the six *chakras* (centres of subtle life energy), and coming into contact with the “*Praṇava Om*”:

When he (the *yogī*), by the practice of *yoga*, acquires power of action and pierces through the six *chakras*, and reaches the sure condition of *parichaya* (awareness, recollection), then the *yogī* truly sees the threefold effects of *karma*. Then, let the *yogī* destroy the multitude of *karmas* by the *Praṇava Om*.

*Shiva Saṃhitā* 3:61–62; cf. *SSV* p.34

A *praṇava* is also a kind of drum.

See also: **Om, Udgītha.**

**rain** A metaphor sometimes used for the Living Waters of the Word, indicating the generous flow of the Lord’s creative Power, and its capacity for making life spring up in the desert of this world.



See also: **Dew, Living Water.**

**Rām (kī) Dhun** (H/Pu) *Lit.* Melody (*Dhun*) of (*kī*) the Lord (*Rām*). Though understood in modern times to be hymns sung in honour of the legendary hero, Rām, Saints have also used the term for the divine Music or Sound Current. Guru Arjun writes of its mystic efficacy:

Sublime is the love of that Lord (*Rām kī Dhun*, Melody of the Lord):  
supremely beautiful are the Lord's lotus feet.  
Those who meditate on them become Saints.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1228, MMS*

See also: **Dhun.**

**Rām Nām** (H/Pu) *Lit.* Name (*Nām*) of God (*Rām*); the all-pervading Name or Word of God, as in:

Drink the nectar of the Lord's Name (*Rām Nām*),  
O my mind, drink the nectar of the divine Name.  
Forsake the company of the evil,  
remain in the company of the Saints,  
listen to their discourses on the Lord.  
Cleanse yourself of lust, anger, ego, greed and attachment,  
and dye yourself deep in the colour of Mīrā's dear Lord.

*Mīrābāī, Bṛīhat Padāvalī 1, Pad 535, MBP1 p.266; cf. MDL p.160*

As a name of God, *Rām* implies a sense of divine omnipresence, hence:

The merchandise thou hast come into the world to obtain,  
that Name of the omnipresent Lord (*Rām Nām*),  
is found in the house of the Saints.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 283, MMS*

*Rām* is commonly used as a *mantra*, where it is regarded as the real name of God. Mystics say that the true Name of God, to be 'repeated' or heard incessantly, is His mystic and creative Power.

See also: **Nām.**

**ras(a)** (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* juice; enjoyment, pleasure, relish; taste, essence; love, affection, desire, charm, sweetness; esoterically, the Elixir, Nectar or Water

of the divine Music, drinking which produces a state of indescribable bliss. Bābā Jaimal Singh, for instance, wrote to his disciple and successor-to-be Mahārāj Sāwan Singh:

One day you will reach *sach khaṇḍ* through the support of *Shabd Dhun*. Listen to the *Shabd Dhun* daily, attach yourself to it, make your home in it, meld the mind into the *Dhun*, then you will relish its bliss (*ras*). What more is there to say? The soul will drink that elixir (*ras*) and experience the sweetness for itself.

*Bābā Jaimal Singh, Spiritual Letters 42, SL p.71*

Guru Arjun speaks of the great sweetness and happiness of devotion to God:

How can I measure the extent of the happiness,  
which ensues when I meditate on the Lord of the world (*Govind*)?  
The one who tastes ... gets satiated:  
his soul alone knows the relish (*ras*).

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 48, MMS*

*Ras* is commonly found in such expressions as *Hari Ras* (Elixir of God), *Amrit Ras* (Elixir of Immortality), *Nām Ras* (Elixir of the Name), and *Mahāras Nām* (Great Elixir of the Name):

He within whose mind the *Guru's* Word (*Shabd*) abides:  
His sorrow, pain and doubt flee.  
He bides in the peace, poise and the bliss  
of the Name Nectar (*Nām Ras*, Elixir of the Name),  
and the celestial Strain (*anhad Bāṇī*) naturally resounds for him.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1079, MMS*

*Ras* is also used in other contexts such as the pleasures of this world.

See also: **Amṛit, Hari Ras.**

**Reason** The faculty of rational thinking, generally presumed to be possessed only by human beings; thus, the quality of mind and being which raises man above the animals; used by scholars to translate *Logos*, *Nous*, *al-'Aql* (*al-Awwal*) and similar terms, often where the terms soul or spirit might be more appropriate.

Other terms used in a similar way include intellect, intelligence, mind, rational spirit, intelligible spirit and so on. The effect of such translations on mystical texts is to reduce a mystical meaning to something intellectual.

See also: ‘aql (5.1), al-‘Aql al-Awwal, Logos, Nous.

**Reshit** (He) *Lit.* Beginning. *Genesis* begins with the phrase, “*Be-reshit bara Elohim*,”<sup>1</sup> generally translated as, “In the beginning, God created.” The medieval Jewish mystical work, the *Zohar*, translates it differently, interpreting the term *Reshit* (Beginning) as corresponding to the *sefirah* (emanation) of *Hokhmah* (Wisdom) – the first projection or emanation of the divine will. In this sense, *Reshit* refers to the divine Creative Word. Sometimes, the Kabbalists also used *Reshit* to mean the first *sefirah* of *Keter*, the Nothing (*Ayin*) or the will-less will of the Godhead.

In Hebrew, the subject of a sentence can be implied but not stated. Hence, according to the *Zohar*, the biblical phrase actually means: “By means of (*Be*) the Beginning (*Reshit*), (it) created (*bara*) the *elohim*.” It – the one who is doing the creating – is the *Ayn-Sof*, the Godhead. The *elohim* are identified with the ‘gods’ or the seven lower *sefirot* – the emanations or divine qualities. Thus, according to the *Zohar*, the passage means: ‘Through *Reshit*, the *Ayn-Sof* created the *elohim*.’

The Kabbalists saw this sentence as describing the entire process of the creation according to the sefirotic system, since it was through the lower *sefirot* (the *elohim*) that the lower realms of creation came into being. The *Zohar* says that the seed of the *sefirah* of *Hokhmah* was planted in the womb of *Binah* (the third *sefirah*), and from that union the other qualities or *sefirot* were projected.

Through this symbolism, Jewish mystics tried to describe the state of concealment of the infinite Godhead giving way to the start of creation when *Hokhmah* or *Reshit* first acts. *Reshit* or *Hokhmah* is the first Word or Utterance, the first expression of the divine will. The *Zohar* expresses this in terms of light and colour:

“In the Beginning”: At the very beginning, the King (*i.e.* *Ayn-Sof*) made engravings in the supernal Purity. A spark of blackness emerged in the sealed within the sealed, from the mystery of *Ayn-Sof*, a mist within matter, implanted in a ring, no white, no black, no red, no yellow, no colour at all. When He measured with the standard of measure, He made colours to provide light. Within the spark, in the innermost part, emerged a source, from which the colours below are painted, and it is sealed among the sealed things of the mystery of

*Ayn-Sof*. It penetrated, but did not penetrate, its air; it was not known at all, until from the pressure of its penetration a single Point shone, sealed, supernal. Beyond this Point nothing is known, and so it is called *Reshit* (Beginning): the first Word of all....

Brightness, sealed among the sealed things, made contact with its air, which touched, but did not touch, the point. Then the “Beginning (*Reshit*)” extended itself and made a palace for itself, for glory and praise. There it sowed the holy seed in order to beget offspring for the benefit of the world.... With this *Reshit*, the sealed One, which is not known, created this palace. This palace is called *Elohim*, and this mystery is (in the verse) “*Be-Reshit bara Elohim*.”

*Zohar 1:15a; cf. WZl pp.309–10*

The *Zohar* was not the first to make the association of *Reshit* with the creative Power. The second-century Rabbi Hoshaiiah also identified *Reshit* with both *Hokhmah* and the *Torah*.<sup>2</sup> But he, too, was not the first to make the connection. The corresponding Greek word for *Reshit* is *Archē*, and it is with a conscious echo of *Genesis* that the unknown author of John’s gospel begins:

In the Beginning (*Archē*) was the Word (*Logos*).

*John 1:1, KJV*

See also: **ādi** (2.1), **Archē**, **sefirot** (4.1).

1. *Genesis* 1:1.

2. *Midrash Rabbah*, *Genesis* 1:1.

### Right Hand, Right Hand of God See Hand of God.

**River** Metaphorically, the Living Water of the Word, the creative Power, an image first encountered in early Mesopotamian pottery designs as a river flowing from the base of the Tree of Life. The metaphor is later found in the *Genesis* creation myth, which originated in Mesopotamia during the ninth century BCE. The mention of the Tigris and the Euphrates is one of the clues to the story’s Mesopotamian origins:

And a river went out of Eden to water the garden,  
and from thence it was parted,  
and became into four heads.

The name of the first is Pishon:

that is it which compasseth the whole land of *Ḥavilah*,  
where there is gold.

And the gold of that land is good:  
 there is bdellium and the onyx stone.  
 And the name of the second river is Gihon:  
 the same is it that compasseth  
 the whole land of Ethiopia (Cush).  
 And the name of the third river is Hiddekel (Tigris):  
 that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria.  
 And the fourth river is Euphrates.

*Genesis 2:10–14, KJV*

Allegorical and mystical interpretations of the *Genesis* creation stories are common in Jewish mystical literature. Here, the “river” running “out of Eden to water the garden” probably signifies the creative Power as the Living Water, flowing out of eternity to bring life and existence to the creation. Its division “into four heads” perhaps represents the divisions of creation. The first would be the spiritual realms, symbolized as “gold” and other precious materials, “bdellium” being an aromatic resin. The significance of the other geographical regions, if any, is not immediately apparent, and they may even have been a later addition to the original allegory. The Tigris and the Euphrates do have a common source in the Armenian mountains, but no one knows what the two other rivers refer to. Ethiopia actually refers to ancient Ethiopia or Cush, roughly comprising Nubia, modern Sudan and southern Egypt, while Hāvilah is a district of Arabia. But for one river to have divided into four which flowed as far apart as North Africa, Arabia and Mesopotamia, is not only geographically inaccurate but must be geologically impossible as well!

Incidentally, the use of geographical place names for the realms of creation is not without precedent in the ancient Middle East. It was, for example, one of the ways in which the various heavens were identified in Zoroastrianism – a major religion in that part of the world in biblical times.

The imagery of the creative Power as a river is not uncommon in ancient literature, especially in Judaic writings. In keeping with the terminology of his times, Jesus ben Sirach speaks of this divine Power as Wisdom, describing “her” as an overflowing river in the time of harvest. “Her” horizons are those of God Himself, wider than any “man” – as man – can ever comprehend. And he also likens the four rivers of the *Genesis* creation story to her overflowing nature:

That is what makes Wisdom brim like the Pishon,  
 like the Tigris in the season of fruit,  
 what makes understanding brim over like the Euphrates,  
 like the Jordan at harvest time;

And makes discipline flow like the Nile,  
like the Gihon at the time of vintage.

The first man never managed to grasp her entirely,  
nor has the most recent one fully comprehended her;  
For her thoughts are wider than the sea,  
and her designs more profound than the abyss.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 24:25–29, JB*

Then he adds that his own teaching will also be like water running to the flowerbeds or to a garden or irrigating an orchard. Through contact with Wisdom, the erstwhile smallness of his own inner being has become like a river, and his river has grown into a sea. The imagery associated with water is used in a number of ways:

And I, like a conduit from a river,  
like a watercourse running into a garden,  
I said, “I am going to water my orchard,  
I intend to irrigate my flower beds.”  
And see, my conduit has grown into a river,  
and my river has grown into a sea.

Now I shall make discipline (the spiritual path) shine out,  
I shall send its light far and wide.  
I shall pour out teaching like prophecy (spiritual teaching),  
as a legacy to all future generations.  
Observe that I have not toiled for myself alone,  
but for all who are seeking Wisdom.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 24:30–34, JB*

Here, the writer also expresses the universal character of his message. He knows that there will always be those among “future generations” who will also be seekers of the mystic Reality. And he points out that his writing is not a self-indulgence, but is intended to be inspiration for all seekers of the divine Wisdom – whoever, whenever and wherever they are.

The four rivers flowing out of Eden have been given a variety of allegorical and mystical interpretations by different commentators.<sup>1</sup> The first-century Alexandrian Jew, Philo Judaeus, for instance, portrays the *Logos*, the Creative Word, as a river flowing out from the sublime Wisdom which is God Himself, watering the holy “souls that grow upon the sacred mountain of the gods”, mountains being a common metaphor for the spiritual realms:

And the divine *Logos* flows down from the fountain of wisdom that it may irrigate and water – as though they were a garden (*lit.* paradise) – the heavenly shoots and plants of virtue-loving souls that grow upon the sacred mountain of the gods. And this holy *Logos* is “separated into four sources”.

*Philo Judaeus, On Dreams II:36; cf. PCW5 pp.550–51, TGH1 p.244*

Philo then employs a wordplay which works in Greek, but not in English, where the word for ‘source’ also means ‘principles’. He likens these “four sources” to the “four royal virtues” as understood by the Greek Stoic philosophers – the four Stoic principles of prudence, courage, self-mastery and justice. The four rivers flowing out of Eden, he says, symbolize the *Logos* which flows out from the divine Wisdom of God bringing wisdom and virtue to human beings.<sup>2</sup> Continuing, and commenting on one of the psalms, Philo then observes:

Accordingly, one of the companions of Moses, likening this Word to a river, says in the *Hymns*: “The river of God was filled with water.”<sup>3</sup>

Now it is absurd that any of the rivers flowing on earth should be so called; but, as it seems, he (the psalmist) clearly signifies the divine *Logos*, full of the flood of Wisdom, having no part of itself bereft or empty thereof, but rather, as has been said, being entirely diffused throughout the universe and raised up on high by reason of the perpetual and continuous course of that eternally flowing fountain.

*Philo Judaeus, On Dreams II:37; cf. PCW5 pp.552–53, TGH1 pp.244–45*

This would also seem to be the meaning of another of the psalms:

There is a river whose streams refresh the city of God,  
and it sanctifies the dwelling of the Most High.  
God is inside the city, she can never fall,  
at the crack of dawn God helps her.

*Psalms 46:4–5, JB*

The “city of God” and the “dwelling of the Most High” is the human form, for as all mystics have pointed out, God dwells within the human form. The “crack of dawn” refers to the hour of God’s favour – a frequent allusion in Jewish mystic literature – meaning the early hours of the morning, when the vibrations of the world are stilled and the devotees of the Lord keep awake in their meditation. The “river” of the Living Water brings life and refreshment to the dry heart of a human being, parched for want of divine love and bliss.

In another psalm, the writer explains how God's love is extended to all – “man and beast” – though only the “sons of men” can “feast on the bounty of Your house” and “drink from Your River of pleasure”. This psalm also draws on metaphors associated with spiritual food and drink, as well as the “River” as the ever flowing Stream of Life:

*Yahweh*, protector of man and beast,  
 how precious God, Your love!  
 Hence the sons of men  
 take shelter in the shadow of Your wings.

They feast on the bounty of Your house,  
 You give them drink from Your River of pleasure;  
 Yes, with You is the Fountain of Life,  
 by Your light, we see the light.

*Psalm 36:6–9, JB*

Several centuries later, the same metaphor is still in use in the early Christian *Odes of Solomon*. Referring to the audibility of the Life Stream, after describing the coming of the Spirit of the Lord as the speaking strings of a harp, the poet depicts the Spirit as a great and powerful “stream” or “river” which brings water to the parched, “paralysed”, crippled and blind souls in this world, dying through the inner darkness of their sins and *karma*:

For there went forth a Stream,  
 and it became a river, great and broad;  
 And it carried away and shattered everything,  
 and it brought Water to the temple (of the body?).  
 And the barriers which were built by men  
 were unable to restrain it,  
 nor the art of them whose business it is to restrain it.  
 And it spread over the surface of all the earth,  
 and filled everything.  
 And all the thirsty upon earth were given to drink of it,  
 and their thirst was relieved and quenched.  
 For from the Most High was the draught given.

Blessed, therefore, are the Ministers of that Drink,  
 those who have been entrusted with His Water.  
 They have assuaged parched lips,  
 and have awakened the will that was paralysed.



And souls that were close to expiring,  
     they have brought back from the brink of death.  
 And limbs that were crooked,  
     they have been straightened and set up.  
 They gave strength for feebleness,  
     and light to the eyes:  
 For they all recognized them (the Ministers) as the Lord,  
     and thus gained life by the Living Water of eternity.

*Odes of Solomon 6:8–18*

The “Ministers” of the Lord’s “draught”, significantly in the plural, are the perfect Saints, the true sages. Such Saints have always been, and will always be, in this world. They are the ones who are “entrusted with His Water” and are able to raise the spiritually dead and diseased of this world. The same imagery appears in the Manichaean psalms. In one, the writer uses a number of images, all of which are allusions to the Creative Word. “Jesus,” he says, “dug a River”:

Jesus dug a River in the world:  
     he dug a River, even he of the sweet Name.  
 He dug it with the spade of Truth,  
     he dredged it with the basket of Wisdom;  
 The stones (souls) which he dredged from it  
     are like drops of incense (Fragrance);  
 All the waters that are in it are roots of light.

*Psalms of Thomas XII, Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.217*

See also: **Life Stream, Living Water.**

1. e.g. S.D. Fohr, *Adam and Eve, AES* p.124; *Zohar* 1:29a, 1:85a, *ZSSI* pp.111, 283, *JCL*.
2. See also Philo Judaeus, *Allegorical Interpretation* I:19–27.
3. *Psalm* 65:9. Philo follows the Greek *Septuagint*. The *KJV* has, “Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water.”

### **Root, Root of enlightenment, Root of immortality, Root of Life, Root of light**

A root is the organ or branches of any higher plant or tree which serves to anchor the whole plant or tree in the ground or growing medium, also providing a means for the collection of water and nutrients; mystically, one of the many metaphors allied to the Tree of Life.

For a tree, its source of life, so to speak, is in its roots. If the trunk, branches and leaves are cut down, the base will often sprout up from the

root. But if the root is dug out, then the life of the tree is lost. The root, therefore, is the beginning and the source of things, and the term is commonly used in this manner, its precise meaning depending upon the context. Sometimes, the root refers to God; in other instances it signifies the creative Power – the root and substratum of everything in creation.

In one of the early Christian texts, God is described as the “Root of immortality”:

For you are the Lord,  
 who was called the Root of immortality  
 and the Fountain of incorruption,  
 and the Foundation of all the worlds.

*Decease of St John; cf. AAA p.64, MEM p.142*

In a Mandaean text, *Mandā-ḏ-Hiia*, the archetypal and mythical Saviour, is identified as the Father Himself as well as the Son or Word. He is also described as the “Fountain” of Living Water and the “Root of Life”, who has created separation so that subsequently there may be union:

Great is the splendour in which *Mandā-ḏ-Hiia* is arrayed! ...  
 You have come! You come and are ready to reveal yourself.  
 You are immeasurable, infinite and everlasting.  
 You are the Father, you are the Brother, you are the Son;  
 You are the Fountain, you are the great Root of Life;  
 You are the First, you are the Last.  
 You are the Future, for you prepare your own coming,  
 and have separated yourself, in order to reveal yourself.  
 Put far from us your wrath and bring near your mercy.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 75; cf. CPM pp.75–76, MEM p.143*

The expression is also common in the Manichaean psalms. In one, God is described as the “Root of light” who has given His blessing to the Saviour:

The Root of light blesses you...  
 To what shall I compare you, my lord?  
 I will compare you to the sun that shines forth,  
 that comes daily with his rays  
 and gives joy to all created things.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB pp.144–45*

In another Manichaean text, Mānī himself is called the “Root of enlightenment”, the source from which souls find true mystic realization:

Praises be to you, O shining one, Mānī our guide,  
Root of enlightenment, Branch of Life,  
mighty Tree that is all healing.

*Manichaean Text, in KF pp.333, 307 (n.236);  
cf. FN2 p.790, MEM p.155, MF pp.65, 96*

Hence, the devotee says that all attachments to the world have been “gathered in” or severed. All their love has been directed to this divine Root:

I have gathered everything in:  
that which is in my hand,  
I have fastened to the Root.  
Which way am I to turn?

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.155*

A similar expression is sometimes used by Indian mystics when the Sound (*Shabd* or *Nād*) or Name (*Nām*) is referred to as the root Sound (*mūl Shabd* or *mūl Nād*) or root Name (*mūl Nām*).

See also: **Ashvattha, mūl Nād, Tree of Life.**

**Ruah ha-Kodesh** (He) *Lit.* Spirit (*Ruah*) of (*ha*) Holiness (*Kodesh*); the Holy Spirit; the inspirational aspect of God, the power by which God manifests to His devotees and prophets; hence, the creative Power. *Ruah* means wind, breath or spirit, and hence soul, and is related to the word *reah* (fragrance). One of the psalms says:

Cast me not away from Thy presence,  
and take not Thy Holy Spirit (*Ruah ha-Kodesh*) from me.

*Psalm 51:11, KJV*

In Hebrew mystical works, especially of the Kabbalah, *Ruah ha-Kodesh* was used to designate the highest level of spiritual attainment (the ‘stage of the Holy Spirit’) to which the Kabbalists aspired. They hoped that their spiritual practices would draw the *Ruah ha-Kodesh* upon them. In Kabbalist Ḥayyim Vital’s *Sha‘arei Kedushah* (*The Gates of Holiness*), there is a section on *Ruah ha-Kodesh* that describes the various practices used by the Kabbalists to attain this level:

The Seventh Gate: *Ruah ha-Kodesh* in our Times.

In the previous gate, we have warned the initiate regarding the pitfalls that lie in the road leading to enlightenment. Still, he should not

give up. Commenting on the verse, “Deborah was a prophetess,”<sup>1</sup> the prophet Elijah taught his disciples, “I call heaven and earth to witness, that any individual, man or woman, Jew or gentile, freeman or slave, can have *Ruah ha-Kodesh* (Holy Spirit) come upon him. It all depends on his deeds.”

Our own eyes have seen and our own ears have heard distinguished individuals who have attained the level of *Ruah ha-Kodesh*, even in our times. Some of these individuals can predict the future. Others have mastered wisdom that had never been revealed to previous generations.

*Hayyim Vital, Sha'arei Kedushah, SK4 in MKAK pp.194–95*

See also: **ruah** (5.1), **Rūḥ al-Qudus**, **Ruah ha-Kodesh** (►2), **Spirit**.

1. *Judges* 4:4.

**Ruah Yahweh** (He) *Lit.* Spirit (*Ruah*) of God (*Yahweh*); the Breath of God; the Wind of God. *Ruah* means wind, breath or spirit, and hence soul, and is related to the word *reah* (fragrance). *Ruah Yahweh* has a spread of meaning, depending on the context. It is used for God; it is a general way of speaking of the divine will, command or presence; it is the divine creative power.

According to *Genesis*, it is the Spirit of God which ‘hovered over the chaos’ or “moved upon the face of the waters” prior to creation:

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.  
And the earth was without form, and void;  
And darkness was upon the face of the deep.  
And the Spirit of God (*Ruah Yahweh*)  
moved upon the face of the waters.

*Genesis 1:1–2, KJV*

Or as a more modern translation has it, capturing the double meaning of “Wind” and “Spirit”:

And a Wind from God (*Ruah Yahweh*)  
moved upon the face of the waters.

*Genesis 1:2, JCL*

In biblical texts, the same Spirit is described as alighting on the prophets, giving them their prophetic abilities. Thus, in the story of Samuel and Saul, Samuel tells Saul:

The Spirit of the Lord (*Ruaḥ Yahweh*) will come upon thee,  
and thou shalt prophesy with them,  
and shalt be turned into another man.

*1 Samuel 10:6, KJV*

And later that same day, this is indeed what happens:

And when they came thither to the hill,  
behold, a company of prophets met him (Saul);  
And the Spirit of God (*Ruaḥ Yahweh*) came upon him,  
and he prophesied among them.

*1 Samuel 10:10, KJV*

Since terms for wind, breath, fragrance and spirit were the same or derived from the same root, many writers used a wordplay to express their point, as in *Job*:

The Spirit of God (*Ruaḥ Yahweh*) hath made me,  
and the Breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

*Job 33:4, KJV*

And Isaiah describes the Messiah or Saviour as being imbued with the “Spirit of the Lord”:

And the Spirit of the Lord (*Ruaḥ Yahweh*)  
shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of Wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

*Isaiah 11:2, KJV*

Here, the other attributes and qualities ascribed to the Spirit – wisdom, understanding, counsel, might and so on – were understood by the medieval Kabbalists as specific references to the *sefirot*, the emanations of the various aspects of the Godhead into creation.

See also: **ruaḥ** (5.1), **Spirit**.

**Rūḥ al-Qudus, Rūḥ al-Quds (A), Rūḥ-i Qudsī (P)** *Lit.* Spirit (*Rūḥ*) of Holiness (*Qudus*); the Holy Spirit; essentially, the creative Power as the source of divine inspiration; also an epithet of the angel *Jabraʿīl* (Gabriel) as an angelic personification of the Holy Spirit, understood in Islam to have

brought down the revelation of the *Qur'ān* to Muḥammad, although according to the *Qur'ān*, the Holy Spirit is also available to ordinary people;<sup>1</sup> also called *Rūḥ al-Qudus al-nabawī*, the Holy Spirit of the prophets (*nabawī*).

In Islam, it is also understood to be the power that aided and strengthened Jesus, the *Ism al-A'zam* (the Exalted Name), whereby Jesus brought the dead to life:

To Jesus, the son of Mary, We gave clear (signs),  
and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥ al-Qudus*).  
*Qur'ān* 2:253, AYA

Then will *Allāh* say:  
“O Jesus, the son of Mary!  
Recount my favour to you and to your mother.  
Behold! I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥ al-Qudus*),  
so that you spoke to the people in childhood,  
and in maturity.”

*Qur'ān* 5:110; cf. AYA

The *Rūḥ al-Qudus* is the power which aids not only Jesus, but all mystics. It is the divine creative power. In this world, mystics convey their teachings to their disciples by words, but the real teachings of a mystic are the experiences of the higher Reality, and these come about, as in the case of Muḥammad, by contact with the *Rūḥ al-Qudus*, beyond the realm of words:

Another thing remains to be said,  
but the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥ al-Quds*)  
will tell you the tale of it, without me.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:1298, MJR4 p.73*

Rūmī also says that these revelations of the *Rūḥ-i Qudsī* are as unquestionable as “a statute”. By comparison, intellectual knowledge is conjecture and inference, like an “analogy” or precedent, and consequently untrustworthy:

Whenever a lawyer knows a statute,  
in that case he will not think of using analogy;  
But in a case where he does not find a statute,  
there he will produce an example from analogy.

Know for sure that statute  
is the revelation of the Holy Spirit (*Rūḥ-i Qudsī*),  
and the analogy made by the individual intellect  
is subordinate to this.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:3581–83; cf. MJR4 p.201*

The *Rūḥ al-Qudus* is also the power which creates and sustains the universe. Al-Jīlī says:

You must know that every sensible object has a created spirit which constitutes its form, and the spirit is to the form as the meaning to the word. The created spirit has a divine Spirit which constitutes it, and that divine Spirit is the *Rūḥ al-Qudus*.

*Al-Jīlī, al-Insān al-Kāmil 2:11.4ff., in SIM p.109*

See also: **Spirit, Ruah ha-Kodesh, rūḥ** (5.1), **al-Rūḥ** (4.2).

1. *Qur'ān* 58:23.

**ṣabā** (P) The name of the gentle early morning breeze, the dawn wind.

See **bād-i ṣabā**.

**ṣadā** (A/P) *Lit.* echo, reverberation, such as the sound that reverberates in a dome; also, call (as to prayer), cry; mystically, the creative Power of God; also as *Ṣadā-yi āsmānī* (Echo from heaven), equivalent to *Nidā'-yi āsmānī* (Sound from heaven) and *Bāng-i āsmānī* (Call from heaven). Rūmī quotes Muḥammad as saying, “The Voice of God (*Āvāz-i Khudā*) is coming into my ears like an echo (*ṣadā*).”<sup>1</sup>

In *Risālah-i Haqq Numā* (*The Compass of Truth*), the seventeenth-century Muḥammad Dārā Shikoh speaks of listening to a “very subtle Sound”:

And in this attention, you must fix your mind so long as you can, because in the beginning, a very subtle Sound will appear (to observe which will require your utmost attention and concentration). That Sound will slowly become so powerful and overwhelming that it will draw your mind away from all other directions, and absorb it in Itself. Then there will be no place or time when this Sound will not be with you. And this Sound, which draws you away, above yourself, is merely a drop from the ocean of this Sound (that rings through all creation).

*Muḥammad Dārā Shikoh, Risālah-i Haqq Numā; cf. COT pp.17–18*

And he then quotes an unattributed verse:

Put your ear to your own heart and speak and hear,  
because the world is full, through and through,  
with this incomparable and soundless Voice (*Ṣadā-yi bī-navā*) of His.

*Anon., in Risālah-i Haqq Numā, COT p.18*

See also: **Nidā’**.

1. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* II:2880; *MJR*2 p.370.

**sahaj Dhun** (H/Pu) *Lit.* innate (*sahaj*) Melody (*Dhun*); *sahaj* is from the Sanskrit *sahaja*, meaning born (*ja*) together with (*saha*), hence, innate, inborn, inherent, natural (disposition). *Sahaj* occurs frequently in the *Ādi Granth*, where it is commonly translated as balanced, in equipoise, peaceful, tranquil. Thus, *sahaj Dhun* may be translated as the peaceful Melody, the tranquil Melody, the Melody of peace.

*Sahaj* is commonly used in a mystical context to describe the natural, inborn state of the soul when it rises above the realms of the mind. The soul’s natural state is one of peace and bliss; hence, *sahaj Dhun* refers generally to the natural inner peace and bliss derived from listening to the divine Music, and specifically to the Sound as it is heard in the realms beyond the mind. It is one of many names for the divine Sound:

In the former birth, I was Thy slave:  
I can give up Thee not, now.  
The celestial Strain (*sahaj Dhun*, Melody of peace)  
resounds at Thy door,  
and on my forehead is inscribed Thy seal.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 969–70, MMS*

See also: **Dhun**.

**sār Shabd, sat Shabd** (H/Pu) *Lit.* real, true or essential (*sār, sat*) Sound (*Shabd*); the first emanation of the Sound in its highest form as it emanates from *Anāmī* (the nameless One), the highest aspect of the Godhead. As Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh describes:

The *sār Shabd* has the splendour of *Anāmī*:  
it has no name or form.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 18:10.12, SBP p.139*

Kabīr also speaks of the *sār Shabd* as the highest aspect of the *Shabd*, though he uses the term in a more general way. There is a difference, he says, between the different levels of the *Shabd*:

There is a difference between *Shabd* and *Shabd*:  
(true) *Shabd* is the essence of all that is Real.



Explore the difference between *Shabd* and *Shabd*,  
 for the one is higher than the other.  
 There is a difference between *Shabd* and *Shabd*:  
 merge your mind in the true Sound (*sār Shabd*).  
 Cling only to that *Shabd*  
 through which you can meet the Lord.

*Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Shabd 3–4, KSS p.92*

Different mystics have used the same terms to mean different things. Thus, Mahārāj Sāwan Singh uses *ādi Shabd* (original, primeval, innermost Sound), *sat Shabd*, *sār Shabd* and *anhad Shabd* (unstruck Sound) to refer specifically to different stages of the *Shabd*. The *anāhad Shabd* is heard in the astral realm; *sār Shabd* above the realms of the universal mind; *sat Shabd* above that but below eternity; and *ādi Shabd* in eternity:

The real source of the soul (*surat*) is the *ādi Shabd*, out of which *sat Shabd*, *sār Shabd* and *anhad Shabd* are drawn.... The soul, after crossing *sahans dal kanwal* (thousand-petalled lotus) – which is the final stage of the *yogīs* – and by holding onto *anhad Shabd*, gets absorbed in *sār Shabd* which is beyond the three *guṇas* (attributes). From there, it attaches itself to *sat Shabd*, with the help of which it finally merges into *ādi Shabd*.

All creation up to *trikuṭī* (universal mind) is annihilated in *pralaya* (dissolution) and the rest of it – right up to the portals of *sat lok* (true region) – is destroyed in *mahā pralaya* (grand dissolution). The soul which has progressively merged itself into *anhad*, *sār* and *sat Shabd*, finally becomes one with *ādi Shabd*, which is beyond the reach of both *pralaya* and *mahā pralaya*.

*Mahārāj Sāwan Singh, Gurumat Sār, GSS p.76;*  
*cf. Philosophy of the Masters I, PM1 p.xvi*

See also: **nij Nām, Shabd.**

**Sat Nām** (H/Pu) *Lit.* true (*Sat*) Name (*Nām*) of God; a name for the true, mystic, unwritten or unspoken Word or Name of God:

My tongue utters Thine acquired names (*kirtam nām*):  
 the true Name (*Sat Nām*) is Thy primal and ancient Name.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1083, MMS*

Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh says that *Sat Nām* is the mystic Name which “pervades” the eternal or true realm (*sat lok*), whose lord is *Sat Purush* (true Being):

The Lord in *Shabd* form is always with you:

He is never parted from you.

Have patience and you will see the true Light.

*Sat Nām*, the name of *Sat Purush*, pervades *sat lok*.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 33:23.3–4, SBP p.280*

It is obtained, he says, after ascending through the lower regions of creation:

After ascending *sahasra dal kamal*, reach *trikuṭī*.

After bathing in *mānsarovar* proceed to *mahā sunn*,

and then to *bhanwar guphā*;

Thereafter, you will obtain the real treasure of the true Name *Sat Nām*.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 31:3.12–13, SBP p.255*

*Sat Nām* is also an appellation of the Lord of the fifth spiritual region (*sat lok*, *sach khaṇḍ*), according to the descriptions of some Indian mystics; he is regarded as the true spiritual Father of the soul.

See also: **Nām**, **sat lok** (2.1), **Sat Purush** (2.1).

**sat Shabd** (H/Pu) See **sār Shabd**.

**Ṣawt** (A/P), **al-Ṣawt al-nādir**, **al-Ṣawt al-sarmadī** (A), **Ṣawt-i nādir**, **Ṣawt-i sarmadī** (P) *Lit.* Sound, Voice, Melody (*Ṣawt*); the rare, wonderful or precious (*nādir*) Sound; the eternal (*sarmadī*) Sound; the Sound of the Absolute, the divine Sound, the divine Music; the creative Power of God. Shāh Niyāz writes:

The world has come into being through the Sound (*Ṣawt*),  
and from it has spread light on all sides.

*Shāh Niyāz Barelvī, Dīvān, Maṣnaviyāt 3, DNB p.91*

This Sound is omnipresent, but it can only be discovered through mystic practice:

The whole world is replete with Sound (*Ṣawt*),  
but you have to open your inner ear.

Then you will hear that never ending Melody,

will cross the gates of death,

and will go beyond the beginning and end of things.

*Shāh Niyāz Barelvī, Dīvān, Maṣnaviyāt 3, DNB p.90*

‘Ināyat Khān calls it the “abstract Sound”:

Abstract Sound is called *Ṣawt-i sarmadī* by the Sufis; all space is filled with it.... It was the *Ṣawt-i sarmadī*, the Sound of the abstract plane, which Muḥammad heard in the cave Ghār-i Ḥirā’.... Moses heard this very Sound on Mount Sinai ... and the same Word was audible to Christ when absorbed in his heavenly Father in the wilderness. *Shiva* heard the same *anāhata Nāda* during his *samādhi* in the cave of the Himalayas.

The flute of Kṛishṇa is symbolic of the same Sound. This Sound is the source of all revelation to the Masters.... Whoever has followed the strains of this Sound has forgotten all earthly distinctions....

The Sound of the Abstract is always going on within, around and about man. Man does not hear it as a rule, because his consciousness is entirely centred in his material existence.... In comparison to it, the sounds of the earth are like that of a whistle to a drum. When the abstract Sound is audible, all other sounds become indistinct to the mystic. The Sound of the Abstract is called *Anāhata* in the *Vedas*, meaning unlimited Sound.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 pp.62–63*

See also: **Nidā’, Sound.**

**Seed, Seed of Truth** A seed is the source, the beginning or germ of something, specifically plants, but also of other creatures, as well as ideas, undertakings and so on; used by Jesus and by mystics after him, and possibly before, for the Word of God which is sown within the disciples of a Master. It appears in the parable of the sower, where Jesus explains:

Now the parable is this: the Seed is the Word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

*Luke 8:11–12, KJV*

The parable is echoed throughout early Christian literature. In the *Acts of Thomas*, one of the characters, having just received baptism, says:

I have received the Living Seed of the Word,  
and fruits which are like unto the Seed  
I shall yield in my Lord Jesus.

*Acts of Thomas VIII, AAA p.226*

Likewise in the Manichaean writings, the Saviour is described as the “sower of the Seed of Truth”.<sup>1</sup> In another Manichaean text, seemingly sent by Mānī himself as a letter or a message to those giving out his teachings to others, the “Seed” is specifically identified with the “pure Word”:

Teach the mixing of the soul and the sinful reflection (*i.e.* the mind), and how to separate the one from the other. Understand your Seed: the pure Word that itself is the pilot for the soul in the body. And through it (the pure Word), fully know that the false word that leads to the hell of darkness, is a pilot of hell.... Remember rebirth and the hard hell, where the souls are oppressed and wounded in anguish. Maintain the longing of the soul for the treasure of the Word, so that you may enter the paradise of light.

*Manichaean Text, MM3 p.873ff., RMP az; cf. GSR p.48:7, ML p.48*

Mandaean literature uses the term in a similar manner, although, in this instance, the “Seed” is also the male essence. This “Seed”, the “First Seed” or the “Living Seed” is the first creation of God:

He (God) remained alone for a thousand thousand years,  
an endless (period) until the Living Seed went forth,  
and the mysteries became hot,  
and assembled themselves in the divine Womb....

The First Seed was formed by the Father:  
He is its origin.  
Well is it for him who wears this crown of the divine Father! ...

The Seed engendered by the Truth (*Kūshṭā*) was of the Father.  
*Thousand and Twelve Questions II:89, I:98,181; cf. TTQ pp.228, 136, 153*

Describing the ascent of a soul, another Mandaean text depicts the “Seed” of the “Vine” – the Tree of Life or Word – as the divine Essence in which all souls have their being – the “great Root of souls”:

They opened for him the gate of the treasure house,  
lifted up for him the great curtain of Truth;  
They brought him in and showed him that Vine  
whose inner part is splendour, whose sides are light,  
whose heels are water, whose branches are *‘uthras* (spirits),  
whose leaves are the lanterns of light,  
and whose Seed is the great Root of souls.

*Mandaean Ginza (Treasury); cf. GSBM p.429, MEM pp.151–52*

See also: **Sower** (►2).

1. *Manichaean Text*, MH p.27ff., HMV p.344, ML p.12.

**Shabd(a)** (S/H/Pu), **Sabd** (H/Pu) *Lit.* a word, especially the right word; a sound or noise produced by some action; verbal communication, verbal evidence; mystically, the Word of God, the Creative Word as the divine Sound, the Sound Current, the transcendent Melody, the creative Power, the source of all creation; also found in such expressions as *anāhata Shabda* and *anhad Shabd* (unstruck Sound), *ādi Shabd* (primal Sound), *mūl Shabd* (root Sound, essential Sound), *Shabd Dhun* (Melody of the Sound), *Shabd Dhārā* and *Shabd kī Dhār* (Sound Current), *sat Shabd* (true Word), and so on. In Hindi and Punjabi, a *shabd* is also a song, a hymn, a religious or spiritual poem; thus, the writings of the mystics in the form of spiritual or devotional poems, often sung, such as are found in the *Ādi Granth* (Sikh scriptures), are known as *shabds*. The nearest single word used to translate this usage of *shabd*, though rather unsatisfactory, is ‘hymn’.

The *Shabd* is the active and creative Power of God. Every particle of the creation is in motion, vibrating. Without this motion, it could never exist. As physicists delve deeper into matter, they have discovered that the smaller the ‘particle’, the faster it appears to vibrate. Even an apparently inert stone moves and changes constantly within itself because of this vibration. The speed of this vibration is exceptionally rapid.

Scientists acknowledge that they have no idea what keeps the physical creation in this state of perpetual motion. The Power by which creation is continually sustained and maintained in existence is unknown to science. Mystics say that this Power is the *Shabd*, the primal Vibration of God that projects the creation and keeps it in existence.

The physical ears experience the vibration of only a tiny, scaled-down part of this motion – the vibration of air molecules at the physical level. The physical eyes perceive the electromagnetic vibrations known as light. Similarly, the other senses only perceive very narrow windows into the interactions of material substance. But the source of all this vibration is not perceived with the physical senses.

However, the mind and soul, when concentrated and awakened inside, possess the faculty to hear this primal Vibration. This is the divine Sound, the true Cosmic Music. The inner faculties also see this celestial Power as light.

The *Shabd* is said to be of two kinds: *varṇātmak* (*lit.* composed of letters, *i.e.* that which is written or spoken) and *dhunātmak* (*lit.* composed of sound, *i.e.* that which is unutterable, unspoken or unwritten). *Dhunātmak Shabd* has no written symbol. It can be discerned and experienced by the inner

mind and the soul only. This is the spiritual Sound which the disciple of a perfect Master is taught to hear. This spiritual Sound, which is also experienced within as light, is the real Power that guides the disciple back to the original Home. The real and inner Master is a manifestation of that *Shabd*. That is the true *Shabd*.

As the soul rises up on the current of the *Shabd*, the sound that is heard changes. Some Indian mystics have spoken of five Sounds (*pañch Shabd*), corresponding to five major realms of creation. Just as a river is one continuous stream, but may make different sounds as it passes over the mountains, the rocks and the plains, so too is the *Shabd* one unified power, but is heard as different sounds as the soul ascends. There are thus five Sounds, but only one *Shabd*.

There are many places in the mystic literature of India where the *Shabd* is extolled as the highest of all powers and the means whereby liberation from birth and death and God-realization may be attained. The *Gurus* whose writings are collected together in the *Ādi Granth* have written:

The creation and deluge (*parlo*, dissolution)  
 occur through the Lord's Word (*Shabd*):  
 Through the Word (*Shabd*), the creation evolves again.  
*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 117, MMS*

It is through the *Guru* (*Gur te Shabd*, the *Guru's* Word)  
 that the Lord is met.  
*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 158, MMS*

And, where *Shabd* is translated as Name, another term for the creative Power:

The one Lord's Name (*Shabd*, Word) abides in my mind,  
 and I shall not be born again.  
*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 795, MMS*

Imbibing love for the one Name (*Shabd*, Word),  
 day and night, I ever remain in bliss.  
*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1265, MMS*

Other mystics have also written extensively of the *Shabd*. The *Shabd* is an eternal power:

The *Shabd* does not perish:  
 it is immortal (*amar*).

The *Shabd* does not burn:  
it is imperishable (*ajar*).

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:3.15, SBP p.89*

The *Shabd* has created everything:

From *Shabd* have emanated the earth and the heaven;  
From *Shabd* have emerged love and devotion;  
*Shabd* has created the entire world;  
It is *Shabd* which holds together  
the entire panorama of the universe.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Dariyā Sāgar, Chaupaī 935–36, DG2 p.94; cf. DSSB p.266*

Know that *Shabd* is the beginning of all creation,  
and that *Shabd* is the end of everything.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:3.1, SBP p.88*

The *Shabd* is the means by which the mind can be controlled:

Without the *Shabd*, the mind cannot be controlled,  
so now give your attention to the *Shabd*.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:1.7, SBP p.87*

The *Shabd* can be contacted by focusing the mind at the eye centre:

Draw your soul inwards, and see the door (eye centre):  
on the right side is the Sound Current (*Shabd kī Dhār*).

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:4.17, SBP p.90*

Contact with the *Shabd* brings great bliss:

When the soul merges into the *Shabd*  
and becomes one with it,  
then supreme bliss is obtained.

*Ravidās, Darshan, Pad 77:1, RD p.80*

The *Shabd* is the highest reality, and brings about salvation of the soul:

Except *Shabd*, there is no other reality:  
at the top of my voice I proclaim repeatedly....

Hold onto the *Shabd* and leave all else:  
without *Shabd* there is no salvation.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:4.11, 15, SBP p.90*

See also: **Davar, Kalimah, Life Stream, Logos, Memra, Word.**

**Shabd (kī) Dhār(ā)** (H) *Lit.* Sound (*Shabd*) Current (*Dhārā*); Stream of (*kī*) Sound; terms used by Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh for the Creative Word of God as the divine Sound or creative Power.

See also: **Shabd.**

**Shadow of God** A term used by Philo Judaeus, the first-century Alexandrian Jew, for the *Logos*. The *Logos* (Word) is the Shadow of God or the Image of God in the sense that it is the first projection from the divine Source, and – like a shadow or an image – it is intimately associated with that which gives it birth. Philo says:

But God's Shadow is His *Logos*, by using which, as if it were an instrument, He made the cosmos. And this Shadow is, as it were, the archetypal model of all else. For just as God is the original of the Image, to which the title Shadow has just been given, so (in its turn) is that Image the model of all else, as the prophet (Moses) made clear at the beginning of the law giving, when he said: "And God made man according to the Image of God"<sup>1</sup> – implying that the Image had been made as representative of God, and man being made according to this Image.

*Philo Judaeus, Allegorical Interpretation III:31; cf. PCW1 pp.364–67, TGH1 p.236*

See also: **Image of God, zelem** (5.1).

1. *Genesis* 1:27.

**shefa** (He) *Lit.* abundance, flow; thus, outpouring, influx; spiritually, the flow or outpouring of divine grace or life; also, the process of emanation. The term originates in *Deuteronomy* where it means simply 'abundance'. When blessing the twelve tribes, Moses says:

The people shall be called to the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness; for they shall suck of the abundance (*shefa*) of the seas, and of treasures hidden in the sand.

*Deuteronomy* 33:19; cf. *JCL*

Jewish mystics of the Middle Ages invested the term with a specifically mystic meaning, as the outpouring of divine power, grace or sustenance.



Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021–1058), in his *Fons Vitae* (*The Fountain of Life*), uses *shefa* to describe the abundant, overflowing nature of God's grace. Later, the Kabbalists described the divine Power that infuses and is immanent in creation as the *shefa*. Over time, they developed the complex symbolism of the interrelated *sefirot* and the realms of creation, to show the link between the transcendent Lord and the divine Power that gives life to every tiny part of the creation.

In his discussion of the basic principles of the Kabbalah, Lawrence Fine explains:

Not only does everything in the material world *mirror* a spiritual reality above but everything in creation is *invested* with divine vitality (*hiyyut*) or abundance (*shefa*) from the *sefirot*. There is a continuous flow of divine nourishment and blessing from one realm to the other, endowing all things in the lower world with life. God “fills everything” in the sense that all of nature pulsates with divine light. There is, in other words, a substantive continuity, an integral connection between the two levels of reality. In order to express this relationship the Kabbalah employs the image of a cosmic chain in which everything is linked to everything else. All the elements of existence – from the most hidden to the most visible – are intimately and inextricably bound to one another. All things trace their roots back to the inner recesses of the Source of all being, *Ayn-Sof*.

*Lawrence Fine, Kabbalistic Texts, BSBH p.326*

In describing the flow of the *shefa* from the upper realms, the Kabbalists taught that it originates in the *sefirah* (emanation) of *Hesed* (Love, Grace, Mercy) and flows to the world through *Malkut* (Kingship), the lowest *sefirah*. Thus, “All things in the created world are enlivened by virtue of the divine life within it.”<sup>1</sup>

The Kabbalists also used *shefa* to mean the divine ‘influx’ – the Holy Spirit that enters the receptive vessel of the disciple during meditation. The thirteenth-century Abraham Abulafia, for example, taught *zeruf* – a method of meditation on the letters of the divine ‘names’ in order to invoke the descent of the divine “influx (*shefa*)”.<sup>2</sup> In his book, *Ḥayyei ‘Olam ha-Ba* (*Life of the Future World*), he first gives instructions on meditation, following it with a description of receiving the *shefa*:

“Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”<sup>3</sup> Prepare yourself, unify your heart, and purify your body. Choose a special place for yourself, where your voice will not be heard by anyone else. Meditate alone, with no one else present. Sit in one place in a room or attic. Do not reveal your secret to anyone....

Then begin to permute a number of letters. You may use only a few, or you may use many. Transpose and permute them quickly, until your heart is warmed as a result.... From the permutations, you will gain new knowledge that you never learned from human traditions nor derived from intellectual analysis. When you experience this, you are prepared to receive the influx (*shefa*).

The influx (*shefa*) will then come, bestowed to you. It will arouse in you many words, one after the other.

*Abraham Abulafia, Hayyei 'Olam ha-Ba, HOB p.19a ff., in MKAK p.96*

He continues by describing how the meditator is to conceive of God and to prepare his heart and mind to “understand the many things that come to you through the letters that your heart imagines” through the “divine influx (*shefa*)”:

The divine influx (*shefa*) will begin to prevail in you, and will weaken your external and internal organs. Your entire body will begin to tremble, until you think that you are about to die. This is because your soul is separating itself from your body as a result of the great joy that you experience when you perceive and recognize these things.

In your mind, you will then choose death rather than life. For death only involves the body, and as a result, the soul lives forever when it is resurrected.

You will then know that you have reached a level where you are receiving the divine influx (*shefa*).

*Abraham Abulafia, Hayyei 'Olam ha-Ba, HOB p.19a ff., in MKAK p.97*

1. Lawrence Fine, *Kabbalistic Texts, BSBH* p.326.
2. Perle Epstein, *Kabbalah: The Way of the Jewish Mystic, KWJM* p.96.
3. cf. *Amos* 4:12.

**Shem, Shem Kodsho** (He) *Lit.* Name (*Shem*); Holy (*Kodsho*) Name; the Holy Name, the creative Power; a common biblical term, generally referring to the power of the Name (*Shem*) of God, trusting in the Name, and so on, such passages attributing God’s power and presence to His Name. In the *Psalms*, for instance, God’s holiness is understood to be expressed through His Name or His Holy Name. His Name embodies His divine Power, His Essence:

Bless the Lord, O my soul;  
And all that is within me,  
bless His Holy Name (*Shem Kodsho*).

*Psalms 103:1, JCL*

Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;  
 Talk you of all His wondrous works.  
 Glory in His Holy Name (*Shem Kodsho*);  
 Let the heart of those who seek the Lord rejoice.  
 Seek the Lord, and His strength;  
 Seek His face continually.

*Psalm 105:2–4, JCL*

Even today, devoted Jews often refer to God as *ha-Shem* (the Name), in deference to the taboo on pronouncing the name *Yahweh*. Although *Yahweh* is an outer name that can be spoken and written, it is commonly regarded as sanctified and holy – as His ineffable Name, carrying His power. Mystics, however, have taught that even the name *Yahweh* is not the inner, ineffable Name. The true inner Name cannot be vocalized as it transcends language and any external expression. Even if there were no prohibition on pronouncing it, it could not be spoken.

See also: **ch'áng Míng, al-Ism al-A'zam, Nām, Name.**

**Silence** The inner realms, being full of peace and restfulness, are as if silent compared to the bustle and busy-ness of life in the material world. God Himself has also been called the Silence, since He is still and completely at rest, beyond all the activity of His creation. The creative Sound or Music has thus been called the silent Music, the Voice of the Silence and by other similar expressions. A Manichaean psalmist, for instance, addresses God as:

You are silent and speak, too.  
*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.155*

In the gnostic text, the *Thunder: Perfect Mind*, the writer – writing in the name of God – says:

I am the Silence that is incomprehensible  
 and the Thought (*Epinoia*) whose remembrance is frequent.  
 I am the Voice whose sound is manifold  
 and the Word (*Logos*) whose appearance is multiple.

*Thunder: Perfect Mind 14, NHS11 pp.236–37*

And again, in another gnostic text:

I am a Voice speaking softly.  
 I exist from the first.

I dwell within the Silence...  
 And it is the hidden Voice that dwells within me,  
 within the incomprehensible, immeasurable Thought,  
 within the immeasurable Silence.

*Trimorphic Protennoia 35:32–34, 36:1–2, NHS28 pp.402–5*

The author of the gnostic *Allogenes* says that within the inner silence, he has heard the “blessedness” which brings with it knowledge of the “real self” or soul:

There was within me a stillness of silence,  
 and I heard the blessedness  
 whereby I knew my real self.

*Allogenes 60; cf. NHS28 pp.222–23*

These are all references to the divine Sound.

See also: **silent Music, sonorous Sound.**

**silent Music** The divine Sound heard within the soul; used by John of the Cross. In his *Spiritual Canticle*, he writes of

the sonorous rivers, the whisper of amorous breezes,  
 the tranquil night, at the time of the rising of the dawn,  
 the silent Music, the sounding Solitude,  
 the supper that recreates and enkindles love.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XIV–XV, CWJC2 p.246*

In explaining this passage, he says:

In that aforesaid tranquillity and silence of the night, and in that knowledge of the divine Light, the soul is able to see a marvellous fitness and disposition of the wisdom of God in the diversities of all His creatures and works, ... so that it seems to hear a harmony of sublimest Music surpassing all concerts and melodies of the world.

The bride (the soul) calls this Music silent because ... it is a tranquil and quiet intelligence, without sound of voices. And in it are thus enjoyed both the sweetness of the Music and the quiet of the silence. And so she says that her Beloved (the Word) is this silent Music, because this harmony of spiritual Music is known and experienced in him.

Not only so, but likewise He is the “sounding Solitude”. This is

almost the same as silent Music. For, although that Music is silent to the senses and the natural faculties, it is a most sounding Solitude to the spiritual faculties. For when these are alone and empty of all natural forms and apprehensions, they can readily and most sonorously receive, in the spirit, the spiritual Sound of the excellence of God.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XIV–XV:25–26, CWJC2 pp.259–60*

John of the Cross equates this “spiritual Sound” to the “Voice of many harpers who harped upon their harps”, as described in *Revelations*.<sup>1</sup> This was not material music, he emphasizes, but spiritual:

This was in the spirit: he speaks not of material harps, but of a certain knowledge which he had of the praises of the blessed, which each one, according to his own degree of glory, makes to God continually. And this is like music, for as each one possesses the gifts of God in a different degree, even so does each one sing the praises of God in a different degree, yet all make one harmony of love, just as in music.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XIV–XV:26, CWJC2 p.260*

John of the Cross also refers to this Sound as the divine Whisper, the spiritual Voice and the sonorous Sound.

See also: **divine Whisper, sonorous Sound.**

1. *Book of Revelation* 14:2; cf. *Book of Revelation* 1:15, 18:22, 19:6.

**Son, Son of God** Jesus Christ as one of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) of Christian theology, understood to be merged in one Godhead; mystically, the primal emanation or ‘Son’ of God the Father, also known as the Word or *Logos*; also, the personification of this Power in the person of a true Saviour.

Many Christians have understood the essential Son of God to be the mystic Word. John of the Cross, for instance, is speaking of this creative Power when he says, “Wisdom ... is the Word, the Son of God.”<sup>1</sup> Likewise, equating the Son of God with the Word, he speaks of the love of:

the soul that is enamoured of the Word, the Son of God, her Spouse, desiring to be united with Him through clear and essential vision.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle I:2, CWJC2 p.187*

But, he continues, the Word is hidden from the soul:

The place where the Son of God is hidden is, as Saint John says, “the bosom of the Father”,<sup>2</sup> which is the divine Essence, which is removed from every mortal eye and hidden from all human understanding.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle I:3, CWJC2 p.187*

The idea of the *Logos* or its human personification as a Son of God did not originate with Christianity. Philo Judaeus, for example, an Alexandrian contemporary of Jesus who shows no indication of knowing about Jesus, firmly names the *Logos* as God’s First-born Son. In this extract, he is speaking of God as the shepherd of the various parts of His creation which follow His command like a flock of sheep:

This hallowed flock, He leads with right and law, setting over it His own true *Logos*, His First-born Son, who shall succeed unto the care of this sacred flock, as though he were some viceroy of a great king.

*Philo Judaeus, On Husbandry 12; cf. PCW3 pp.133–35, TGH1 p.238*

Speaking of the mystic symbolism in biblical descriptions of the garments of the high priest, he also says:

For it was necessary that he who was consecrated to the Father of the creation, should have His Son, the most perfect in virtue, as intercessor, both for the forgiveness (*lit.* an amnesty or forgetfulness) of sins and for the abundant supply of the most unstinted blessings.

*Philo Judaeus, On the Life of Moses II:26; cf. PCW6 pp.514–15, TGH1 pp.250–51*

The Son of God is also called the First-born Son or the Only-begotten Son, with many gnostic, Manichaeic and Mandaean texts using these terms.

See also: **First-born Son, Only-begotten Son, Son of God** (►2).

1. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle* XXXVI:7, CWJC2 p.361.
2. *John* 1:18.

**sonorous Sound** An expression used by the Spanish mystic, John of the Cross, in his descriptions of the divine Sound heard within during contemplation. In his *Spiritual Canticle*, he likens the soul’s mystic experience of the Beloved (who, he says, represents the Word) to the flowing of mighty rivers. “Rivers,” he begins, “have three properties”:

The first is that they assail and submerge all that they meet; the second, that they fill up all the low and hollow places that are in their path.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XIV–XV:9, CWJC2 p.250*

He goes on to draw spiritual analogies from these characteristics. It is the third property which is of interest in the present context:

The third (property is) that their sound is such as to drown and take the place of all (other) sounds.... (It) is a spiritual Voice and sonorous Sound which is above all (other) sounds and voices, the which Voice drowns every other voice, and its Sound exceeds all the sounds in the world. And in the exposition hereof we must occupy ourselves for some little space.

This Voice or sonorous Sound of these rivers ... is a fulfilment so abundant that it fills the soul with good things; and a Power so powerful that it possesses the soul and appears to her not merely as the sound of rivers, but as most powerful thunderings.

But this Voice is a spiritual Voice and is unaccompanied by those physical sounds, and by the pain and trouble of them, but is accompanied rather by grandeur, strength, power, delight and glory. And thus it is as an immense and inward Sound and Voice, which clothes the soul with power and strength.

This spiritual Voice and Sound was heard in the spirits of the apostles at the time when the Holy Spirit, in a vehement torrent (as is said in the *Acts of the Apostles*<sup>1</sup>), descended upon them....

It must be understood that God is an infinite Voice, and that, communicating Himself to the soul, ... He produces the effect of an immense Voice.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XIV–XV:9–10, CWJC2 pp.250–52*

John of the Cross goes on to say that it is this mystic Voice which is meant in *Revelations*, when the writer speaks of a “Voice of many waters”<sup>2</sup> and the “Voice of great thunder”.<sup>3</sup> He points out that – though powerful – this “Voice” is not unpleasant. In *Revelations*, it is described as sweet, like a voice of “many harpers who harped upon their harps”:<sup>4</sup>

It may not be inferred that this Voice, because it was so great, was harsh and disagreeable.... This same Voice was so soft that ... it was as of “many harpers who harped upon their harps”.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XIV–XV:11, CWJC2 p.252*

John of the Cross also says that this mystic Voice is the meaning underlying a passage in a ‘revelation’ of Ezekiel where the prophet describes hearing a “noise of great waters, as the Voice of the Almighty”:<sup>5</sup>

He (God) communicated Himself therein (in that Voice) after a manner most high and likewise most gentle. This Voice is infinite, for ...

it is God Himself ... uttering a Voice.... And He produces in the soul great delight and grandeur.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XIV–XV:11, CWJC2 p.252*

This Sound is also referred to by John of the Cross as the divine Whisper, the silent Music and the sounding Solitude.

See also: **divine Whisper, silent Music.**

1. *Acts 2:1ff.*
2. *Book of Revelation 14:2; cf. Book of Revelation 1:15, 19:6.*
3. *Book of Revelation 14:2; cf. Book of Revelation 4:5, 8:5, 10:3–4, 11:19, 19:6.*
4. *Book of Revelation 14:2; cf. Book of Revelation 18:22.*
5. *Ezekiel 1:24, KJV.*

**Sound, Sound Current, Sound of God** Sound is a motion or vibration that propagates as a wave through gases, fluids and solids. Everything in creation, however, exists by virtue of motion. Mystics and scientists both say that the essence of existence in the universe is movement. Everything incessantly vibrates and pulsates, moving in cycles, short or long. Without this constant motion, nothing would exist.

The five bodily senses are an experience of some aspects of this activity. In contemporary scientific terms, sound is waves and oscillations in the air or water, or even in the earth and seemingly solid structures. Light is a perception of a tiny part of the electromagnetic spectrum, the fastest moving physical energy known to man. Touch arises from the appearance of solidity. It is motion, together with electromagnetic and other forces, that gives matter – which is mostly ‘empty’ space – the illusion of being solid. The sensations of heat and cold are also due to a change in the speed of molecular movement. Tasting and smelling arise from the interaction or movement of substances in the nose and mouth.

Without movement, there is nothing. Yet scientists do not know why even the simplest subatomic particles go on vibrating and spinning in the way they do. They have described the motion and nature of these particles in various ways, and through such analyses and descriptions have accomplished a great deal in the technological sphere. Yet the source of the movement, the energy source of physical existence, remains unknown to science. The physical universe seems to be in perpetual motion, yet why and how this is so is a mystery.

The mystics’ answer to this conundrum is that, underlying all the movement and multiplicity in creation, there is one primordial Vibration, present as the divine essence, not only within all things, but within all souls as well.



This mystic Sound, also called the Sound Current or Sound of God, is the ever present, divine creative Power – the means by which the Supreme Being has projected His creation. It is this that gives life, power and movement to everything. The twentieth-century mystic, Mahārāj Sāwan Singh, writes:

This Sound or Melody pervades all. It is even inside stones and wood, as these are made up of atoms, and motion is inherent in them. Because of this motion, everything constantly undergoes change. The motion itself is the cause of change. In reality, everything is changing. This world changes every hour, every minute and every second.

Whether we know it or not, a stone continues to change. There is motion in it. Sound is a necessary corollary of motion and, therefore, a stone is not free from the Sound. Both the bodies that we see and those we do not see are in motion. There is, therefore, Sound in all, and the Sound is the essence of all...

This Melody pervades all and is the life and sustenance of all. This current of consciousness is very subtle. It requires equally subtle ears to hear it.

*Mahārāj Sāwan Singh, Philosophy of the Masters 4, PM4 p.135*

Over two thousand years ago, one of the Hebrew psalmists voiced the same truth. The Sound which maintains the creation in existence is “no sound that anyone can hear”, yet, poetically speaking, all parts of creation send out their voices proclaiming “His handiwork”:

The heavens declare the glory of God,  
the vault of heaven proclaims His handiwork;  
Day discourses of it to day,  
night to night hands on the knowledge.

No utterance at all, no speech,  
no sound that anyone can hear;  
Yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their message to the ends of the world.

*Psalm 19:1–4, JB*

Coming forward in time, one of the early Christian texts identifies this Sound as both the “Word” and the real form of the Saviour:

For what else is Christ,  
but the Word, the Sound of God?

*Acts of Peter XXXVIII, ANT p.335*

From another era, the seventh-century Syrian mystic, ‘Abdīsho‘ Ḥazzāya, like Mahārāj Sāwan Singh, indicates that this Sound is to be heard with subtle ears when he describes the experience of a “subtle Sound” heard “in the spiritual realms” with “spiritual ears” and with the “ears of his heart”. He also speaks of seeing “light” with “eyes of his mind”:

We say that we see light in the spiritual realms; but this light is not like our material light. We say also that we have there a spiritual food; but that food is not like the one we have here. We say further that our mind will perceive there the Sound of the glorification of the spiritual hosts, and that it will there have speech and conversation; but that speech does not resemble the one which we hold one with one another (in this world).

The Sound that is heard there by our mind is so subtle that our senses are not able to receive it, and a corporeal tongue is not able to utter and describe that which is made manifest there to the mind, whether it be made through our sense of vision or through that of hearing....

Blessed is the man who has been found worthy of this gift and of this confidence, and has seen this glorious vision with the eyes of his mind, and heard with the ears of his heart the subtle Sound which, from the state of serenity, is revealed to a spiritual man.

Believe me truly, O brethren, when I tell you that whenever the mind hears the Sound of the spiritual beings with its spiritual ears, all its work (focus of attention) is performed high above the senses of the body and ... its ... faculties, which become silent and restful, as in sleep, through the happiness it receives....

From this glorious and holy vision, you will fall into ecstasy over that broad world, the benefits of which are ineffable. From this ecstasy, you will derive a flow of spiritual speech and knowledge of both worlds: of the one that has passed and the one that shall pass, and also a consciousness of the mysteries of future things, together with a holy smell and taste; the subtle sounds of the spiritual intelligences; joy, jubilation, exultation, glorification, songs, hymns and odes of magnification; communion with the spiritual hierarchies; vision of the souls of the saints (devotees); sight of paradise; eating from its Tree of Life, and communion with the saints who dwell in it, together with other ineffable things.

The above are the signs, which if you find in yourself, you will know that the Holy Spirit, which you received from the holy baptism, is working in you....

In it (a particular spiritual condition) a man hears the Voice of a subtle Sound of glorification, which the faculties of the body and of

the soul are unable to bring to the utterance of the material tongue.  
This condition and this glorification are of the sphere of the next  
world and a foretaste of future blessings.

*‘Abdīsho’ Hazzāya 152a, 153b, 157a, 160a; cf. WS7 pp.160, 162, 167, 171*

This sublime Sound or Voice has been referred to by many other mystics.

See also: **Dhār, Shabd, Speech, Voice.**

**sounding Solitude** The divine Sound or Voice of the Word heard within the  
soul; used by John of the Cross.

See **silent Music.**

**Speech, Speech of Life** Terms sometimes used to translate expressions which  
allude to the audibility of the Creative Word or the Voice of God, as in the  
gnostic text, the *Thunder: Perfect Mind*:

I am the hearing which can be attained by everyone,  
and the Speech which cannot be grasped.

*Thunder: Perfect Mind 19, NHS11 pp.248–49*

And in the Mandaean poem:

Those who listen to the Speech of Life  
will be greatly increased (within),  
will be enriched and will not lack.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 88, CPM p.92*

Likewise, the Manichaean psalms speak specifically of the “Speech” of the  
Spirit:

Fair is your light, my Spirit:  
I would hear your Speech, my holy one.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.169*

In Hebrew, the expression used is *ne’um Adonai* (*lit.* speech of the Lord), a  
dramatic expression generally translated as ‘says the Lord’. This may be  
part of a literary style in which the writer assumed the person of God for  
purposes of a text, but there are places where a mystic meaning may have  
also been intended.

See also: **Bānī, Nuṭq, Sound, Voice, Word.**

**spentā Manthrā** (Av) *Lit.* holy (*spentā*) Word (*Manthrā*); a Zoroastrian name for the Creative Word.

See **Manthrā**.

**spice(s)** Any of a number of vegetable substances, used for their flavour, fragrance and healing properties; mystically, appearing in metaphorical allusions to the sweetness, spirituality and healing qualities of a truly holy soul, and also to the divine Fragrance, a metaphor for the Word of God.

The lyrical writer of the *Song of Songs* uses a large number of such metaphors, often identifying the different spices and fragrances to add colour to the imagery. Thus, the lover (the soul) and the Beloved (the Saviour, the Word) engage in a dialogue, expressing their love and appreciation of each other's spiritual beauty. The Beloved describes the soul:

How fragrant your perfumes,  
more fragrant than all other spices!

*Song of Songs 4:10, JB*

And the soul says of the divine Beloved:

His cheeks are beds of spices,  
banks sweetly scented.

His lips are lilies,  
distilling pure myrrh.

*Song of Songs 5:13, JB*

Likewise, the chorus – speaking of the Beloved – says:

What (who) is this coming up from the desert  
like a column of smoke,  
Breathing of myrrh and frankincense  
and every perfume the merchant knows?

*Song of Songs 3:6, JB*

In these instances, the healing qualities of the spices such as “myrrh” are implied in the metaphor, just as the Word brings true spiritual healing to the soul.

See also: **Fragrance.**

**Spirit, Spirit of God, Spirit of Holiness, Spirit of the Lord, Holy Ghost**

The active power of God within a person; often as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord and so on; commonly used in Judaism, Christianity and Manichaeism; essentially, and from a mystic point of view, the divine creative power, the Word of God. The term occurs in the Old Testament, where the meaning is sometimes uncertain, as in:

The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,  
and His word (Word?) was in my tongue.

*2 Samuel 23:2, KJV*

Others instances are more explicit. The writings of Isaiah, for instance, are deeply mystical and the highest kind of meaning can often be ascribed to them. Speaking of the Messiah, he says:

The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

*Isaiah 11:2, KJV*

The *Zaddik* or Teacher of Righteousness, who is usually thought to have written the psalms or hymns found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, also writes of the Holy Spirit. In one of these psalms, the similar juxtaposition of metaphors makes it probable that the writer had the words of Isaiah in mind. Speaking of himself as the Master, he says that through the soul or spirit he has come to know God; and through the Holy Spirit, he has been enabled to hear God's "Counsel" or Speech. This is almost certainly a reference to the Word, since in the next stanza he speaks of "Thy Wisdom" and the "Fountain of Thy Might" or Power, both of which are also common metaphors for the Word:

I, the Master, know Thee, O my God,  
by the spirit which Thou hast given to me;  
And by Thy Holy Spirit I have faithfully hearkened  
to Thy marvellous Counsel.  
In the mystery of Thy Wisdom,  
Thou hast opened knowledge to me;  
And in Thy mercies,  
Thou hast unlocked for me the Fountain of Thy Might.

*Thanksgiving Hymns XX:10–15 (23), CDSS p.291*

As many mystics have said, it is only through the Holy Spirit, the Wisdom of God or His Fountain of Living Water that a soul can know God, can gain true knowledge or experience of Him, and be the recipient of His mercy.

Christian texts use the term extensively, where it is often translated as the ‘Holy Ghost’ – a variant introduced by the translators of the *King James Version*, since ‘ghost’ meant ‘spirit’ at the time of that translation (1611). This usage survives in the expression ‘giving up the ghost’. Jesus is also said to have baptized with the “Holy Ghost”. According to Matthew, John the Baptist speaks of the coming of Jesus when he says:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance:  
but he that cometh after me is mightier than I,  
whose shoes I am not worthy to bear:  
He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.

*Matthew 3:11, KJV*

In John’s gospel, Jesus also speaks of the “Holy Ghost” as the Comforter (the Paraclete) who will come within the disciples after his departure:

These things have I spoken unto you,  
being yet present with you.  
But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost,  
whom the Father will send in my name,  
he shall teach you all things,  
and bring all things to your remembrance,  
whatsoever I have said unto you.

*John 14:25–26, KJV*

Similarly, in the apocryphal *Acts of John*, John, addressing Jesus, speaks of “your Spirit of Holiness, which has proceeded from your Father, and, lo, dwells in us”.<sup>1</sup> Paul was also explicit when he wrote that the Holy Ghost was within:

What? Know ye not that your body  
is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you,  
which ye have of God?

*1 Corinthians 6:19, KJV*

In the Manichaean psalms, the Holy Spirit is contrasted with the “unclean spirit”, meaning Satan, which is “likened to a snake”, a commonly used metaphor for the devil, derived from the story of Adam and Eve:

The living kingdom shall be revealed again,  
the love of God, the white dove.

For the Holy Spirit was likened to a dove,  
 but the unclean spirit was likened to a snake.  
 The dove and the snake are enemies to each other:  
 the dove does not dwell in a pool unclean.  
 For the Holy Spirit does not take gold and silver,  
 but the unclean spirit is a lover of gold and silver.

*Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.156*

In another of these psalms, the path of the “Spirit of Truth” or the “Holy Spirit” is called the “way of Truth”, and is contrasted with the “Error of the world” and the nature “of darkness”. These are references to the negative power:

Let us worship the Spirit of the Paraclete.  
 Let us bless our Lord Jesus  
 who has sent to us the Spirit of Truth.  
 He came and separated us from the Error of the world;  
 He brought us a mirror:  
 we looked, we saw the universe in it.  
 When the Holy Spirit came,  
 he revealed to us the way of Truth,  
 and taught us that there are two natures,  
 that of light and that of darkness,  
 separate, one from the other, from the beginning (of creation).

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXIII; cf. MPB p.9*

In all these instances, the Spirit is God’s emanation, His presence in creation, His creative Power.

See also: **Holy Ghost, Ruah ha-Kodesh.**

1. *Acts (= History) of John, AAA p.7.*

**spiritual Sound, spiritual Voice** Terms used by John of the Cross for the divine Sound of the Beloved (the Word) in his *Spiritual Canticle*.

See **sonorous Sound, silent Music.**

**Spring, Spring of the Lord** A spring is a natural outflow or source of water from the ground. Mystically, the term is associated with a family of metaphors that include the Living Water, the Water of Life, the Fountain of Life

and so on. It signifies either the creative Power or God Himself, the Source of the ever flowing Living Water. The metaphor is found in many places in the ancient literature, as in the early Christian *Odes of Solomon*, where it refers to the creative Power:

And Speaking Waters touched my lips  
     from the Lord's Spring, plenteously.  
 And I drank and was intoxicated  
     with the Living Water that does not die.

*Odes of Solomon 11:6–7*

Here, “Speaking Waters” embodies a wordplay, since it also means ‘Waters of the *Logos* (Word)’. Some of the other odes are equally explicit:

Here, Draw for yourselves water  
     from the Living Spring of the Lord,  
     because it has been opened to you.  
 Come, all you who thirst, and take a draught,  
     and rest beside the Spring of the Lord.  
 For fair it is and pure,  
     and gives rest to the soul.

Sweeter by far than honey are its waters,  
     and the honeycomb of bees cannot be compared with it;  
 Because it flows forth from the lips of the Lord,  
     and from the heart of the Lord is its Name.

And it came unhindered and unseen,  
     and until it sprang up within them,  
     men knew it not.  
 Blessed are they who have drunk from it,  
     and have found rest thereby.

*Odes of Solomon 30:1–7*

In the *Acts of Thomas*, the speaker compares his previous state to a “moist” or ineffectual spring which he has dried up in order that he may “rest beside Your Living Spring”:

The moist spring that was in me have I dried up,  
     that I may live and rest beside Your Living Spring.

*Acts of Thomas 147; cf. ANT p.429*

He also describes it as:



Sweet Spring that never fails,  
and clear Fountain that is never polluted.

*Acts of Thomas 39; cf. AAA p.180, ANT p.384*

The same term is found among the gnostic writings. In the *Trimorphic Protennoia* and *Tripartite Tractate*, the metaphor refers to the divine Source of Living Water:

It (the Word) is a hidden light,  
bearing the Fruit of Life,  
pouring forth Living Water  
from the invisible, unpolluted, immeasurable Spring.

*Trimorphic Protennoia 46:16–19, NHS28 pp.424–25*

And:

He (the Father) is a Spring,  
which is not diminished by the Water  
which abundantly flows from it.

*Tripartite Tractate 60, NHS22 pp.206–7*

The Mandaeans, too, used the same expression, where the meaning is again the creative Power which fills the soul with divine grace:

You (Life, God) enlarge our steps  
and lift our eyes heavenwards.  
You descend and give us dwellings by Springs of Life.  
You pour (Yourself) into us and fill us  
with Your wisdom, Your doctrine and Your goodness.  
You show us the way  
by which You came from the house of Life.  
And we will walk therein with the gait  
of righteous and believing men;  
So causing our spirits and souls  
to dwell in the dwellings of Life, ...  
Clothed in radiance and covered with light.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 24; cf. CPM p.20*

See also: **Chashmah-’i Āb-i Ḥayāt, Fountain of Life, Living Water, River.**

**Sraosha** (Av), **Srōshāw** (Parthian) *Lit.* hearing; hence, intuition, inspiration. A Zoroastrian term derived from the root *sru* (to hear, to listen, common to

both Sanskrit and Avestan), *Sraosha* is often translated as divine obedience because only one who is obedient will hear and listen. It is clear from Zarathushtra's *Gāthās*, however, that he actually uses the term to refer to the inner Sound or divine Music. It is the creative Power of God – which can be heard within during spiritual practice. It is also the same as *Vohu Manō* (Primal Mind, Primal Intelligence), another term used by Zarathushtra for the creative Power. Thus, Zarathushtra asks with longing:

When shall I see You O *Ashā* (Truth)?  
 When, in wisdom, shall I see *Vohu Manō*?  
 When shall I, guided by *Sraosha*'s Voice,  
 find the path to mighty *Ahurā* (Lord of Life).

This path of the holy Word (*spentā Manthrā*)  
 is the most excellent of paths,  
 forever turning back those who have gone astray,  
 with the Sound of its Voice.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 28:5; cf. DSZ p.104*

*Sraosha* is also described as the “most majestic” aspect or power of *Ahurā Mazdā* (God), because it can bring eternal life:

Now shall I invoke,  
 the most majestic of them all, Your *Sraosha*,  
 for helping us to reach the final goal of life:  
 Achieving life eternal, becoming one with You,  
 within the fold of Your *Vohu Manō*.  
 We tread this narrow path with Truth (*Āsha*),  
 reaching the domain where *Ahurā Mazdā* reigns supreme.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 33:5; cf. DSZ p.319*

Similarly, he speaks of finding *Sraosha* within himself, together with divine light:

And when You commanded, “Follow the Truth (*Āsha*),  
 and thus gain Wisdom” – that was my own wish:  
 I will bestir myself until within me shall arise,  
*Sraosha*, accompanied by that blessed light divine.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 43:12; cf. DSZ p.441*

Zarathushtra also emphasizes that *Sraosha* can only be granted by a “wise, soul-healing Guide” – a Saviour – and it comes as a gift to one upon whom *Ahurā* bestows his love:

This do I ask of You, tell me truly O *Ahurā*:  
 Who will that hero be  
     protecting those who live within Your teachings?  
 Reveal to me that wise, soul-healing Guide and Friend.  
 And let *Sraosha* and *Vohu Manō*,  
     come to whomsoever You love, O *Mazdā*.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 44:16; cf. DSZ p.513*

In another of the *Gāthās*, Zarathushtra speaks of being “awake within” to the *Sraosha*. The verse is addressed to Jāmāspa Hvōgvā, one of Zarathushtra’s close disciples. The verse previous to it is addressed to Frashoshtra Hvōgvā, said to have been a minister at the court of Vishtaspa, while his brother, Jāmāspa, was prime minister. It is said that their sister Havovi was married to Zarathushtra:

O wise Jāmāspa Hvōgvā,  
 I have instructed you in action – not inaction.  
 Therefore, awake within to *Sraosha*,  
     if you seek to worship Him who discriminates  
     between the wise and the unwise –  
 That wondrous protector of the Truth (*Ashā*) – *Ahurā Mazdā*.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 46:17; cf. DSZ p.628*

In later Zoroastrian thought, *Sraosha* is personalized as a deity or archangel presiding over religious inspiration, intuition and revelation. This would appear to be derived from the function of the divine Sound as the source of spiritual experience and revelation.

*Sraosha* appears in Iranian mystic literature as the Parthian variant *Srōshāv*, where it is equated with the Tree of Life, another metaphor for the creative Power. The third-century Iranian mystic, Mānī, especially when addressing those of a Zoroastrian background, explained his teachings by reference to Zarathushtra. Here, the soul is depicted as the “innocent son of *Srōshāv*”, a drop of the ocean of the creative Power:

If you wish, I will instruct you from the testimony of the fathers of old. The holy Zarathushtra, the Saviour, when talking with his soul, (said): “Deep is the drunken stupor in which you sleep. Awake, and look at me! From the world of peace from which I have been sent, grace be upon you!”

And it answered: “I, I am the tender innocent son of *Srōshāv*, I am in a state of impurity and endure (only) suffering: lead me out of the embrace of death.”

With grace, Zarathushtra asked it: “Are you the Word of Old, my

member? May the power of the living and the peace of the highest worlds come to you from your own home. Follow me, son of gentleness, and set the crown of light upon your head, you son of mighty ones who has become so poor that you even have to beg at every place.”

*Manichaean Text, MM3 p.872, RMP ay; cf. ML p.48*

See also: **Manthrā, Shabd, Sound, Srōshahrāy, Vohu Manō.**

**Srōshahrāy** (Parthian) *Lit.* Column of Sound, Column of Glory; a Parthian term used by Mānī (c.216–276 CE) and his followers, often rendered as ‘perfect Man’. Living at a time when Zoroastrianism was a major religion in Persia and the Middle East, Mānī taught from Zarathushtra’s teachings, explaining their mystic meaning and using a number of terms from Zarathushtra’s writings in their Middle Persian equivalents.

*Srōshahrāy* is derived from the Avestan term *Sraosha*, used by Zarathushtra (c.1500 BCE) for the divine Sound. A derived form of *Sraosha*, *Srōshāv* was also used in later Persian as a term for the Tree of Life, another metaphor for the Word or Sound.

In Manichaean writings, the *Srōshahrāy* is equated with the “Living Voice and divine Song”:

Blessed and praised be this mighty Power,  
 the bright and beneficent God, the *Srōshahrāy* –  
 House and covering for all souls,  
 Road and Path for all beings of lights and redeemed souls –  
 May he be blessed so that his splendour, full of life  
 may shine upon the path of the Elect,  
 and bring us peace, well-being  
 and confidence in all lands.  
 May he protect us, bringing us wonderful joy;  
 May he accept from us all this pure prayer,  
 this Living Voice and divine Song.  
 So may it be eternally!

*Manichaean Hymns, MBB p.18ff.; cf. GSR p.135:1.IV.6, ML pp.64–65*

As elsewhere, the Voice refers to both the voice and words of a living Saviour, as well as the divine Voice or creative Power of God. Both are sweet to the hearing, the outer being a reflection of the inner.

See also: **Sraosha.**

**still small voice** See **Voice**.

**still waters** See **Living Water**.

**Stream** A metaphor in the Living Water family, used for the Creative Word, as in Life Stream, Audible Life Stream and so on.

See also: **Life Stream, Living Water, River**.

**Sukhun, Sakhun** (P) *Lit.* word, speech, saying, discourse; used by Rūmī for the Creative Word, the divine creative power. The *Qur'ān* says:

If the sea became ink for the words (*kalimāt*) of my Lord,  
 verily, the sea would be used up  
 before the words (*kalimāt*) of my Lord were exhausted,  
 though we brought another ocean like it for replenishment.

*Qur'ān 18:109; cf. MJR7 p.361*

Rūmī interprets this passage to mean the divine Word (*Sukhun*):

A beginning and an end are necessary  
 if a mean or midpoint between them be conceived in imagination.  
 Since the Infinite has no such limits,  
 how can it be related to any midpoint?  
 No one has ever shown it to have a beginning or an end.  
 He said,  
 “If the sea were to become ink for it (the Word of God)....”  
 If the seven seas should become entirely ink,  
 there would be no hope of finding an end.  
 If orchards and forests should become nothing but pens,  
 there would never be any decrease in this Word (*Sukhun*).  
 All that ink and those pens may pass away,  
 but this infinite Word (*Ḥadīth-i bī-‘adad*) is everlasting.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:3541–46; cf. MJR2 p.405*

Expanding on the theme, Rūmī observes that the forms of creation are being recreated anew, every moment. “Life is ever arriving anew, like water in a stream, though in the body it has the appearance of permanence.” Everything is continuously being “born of the Word (*Sukhun*)”:

Form was born of the Word (*Sukhun*), and died again:  
 the wave drew itself back into the sea.  
 Form came forth from Formlessness, and returned thither,  
 for, “Verily unto Him are we returning.”<sup>1</sup>  
 Every instant, then, you are dying and returning:  
 Muḥammad declared that this world is but a moment.  
 Our thought is an arrow shot from Him (*Hū*) into the air (*hawā*):  
 how can it remain in the air? It returns to God.  
 Every moment the world is renewed,  
 but we live unaware of its renewal.  
 Life is ever arriving anew, like water in a stream,  
 though in the body it has the appearance of permanence.  
 From its swiftness it appears continuous,  
 like a spark which you whirl rapidly with your hand.  
 If you whirl a firebrand with dexterity,  
 it appears to the sight to be a very long line of fire.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1140–47; cf. MJR2 p.64*

This Word, he concludes, is no small matter; it is “an exceedingly great elixir”:

Do not make little of the (divine) Word (*Guftār*),  
 “*ta’ālāw* (come ye)”:<sup>2</sup>  
 This Word (*Sukhun*) is an exceedingly great elixir.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:2025, MJR4 p.384*

See also: **Kalimah, Word.**

1. *Qur’ān* 2:156.
2. *Qur’ān* 3:64.

**Tà Mìng (Dà Mìng) (C)** *Lit.* great (*Tà*) Command (*Mìng*); a term used for the Islamic *Kun* (Be)!, the divine Command or Creative Word, by the eighteenth-century Chinese Muslim, Mǎ Fù Ch’u, when writing of the means whereby the creation comes into being and is maintained in manifested existence. Although *Tà Mìng* is not itself a known Taoist term, *Mìng* is used in both Taoism and Confucianism for Command, Mandate or Fate. *Tà* means ‘great’ or ‘grand’, and its sense is to enhance the meaning of any word following it. Mǎ Fù Ch’u’s writing is interesting for its use of terms common to Taoist and other Chinese philosophies in an Islamic setting:

Creative change begins when the archetypes are born;  
 The great Command (*Tà Mìng*, i.e. *Kun!*) is given,  
     which is the gate to all marvels;  
 Natures and intelligences are separated out,  
     foreshadowing their forms;  
 The myriad intelligences muster and the subtle substance forms;  
 What is called the Primal Spirit (*Yüén Ch'ì*, i.e. *al-Rūḥ al-Awwal*)  
     is truly all-pervasive.  
 From the limits of the first heaven (*hsiēn t'ien*, i.e. *al-Ghayb*),  
     to the roots of the manifest creation (*hòu t'ien*, i.e. *al-dunyā*),  
     the male and female principles emerge,  
     and the four elements are manifested,  
     and their celestial and lower-world aspects fixed;  
 When the myriad forms are complete, they make man.

Now man is the essence of Heaven and Earth;  
 Among the ten thousand transformations,  
     He is a special creation;  
 The quintessence of heaven is man's heart;  
 The glory of earth is his body;  
 The ten thousand intelligent principles  
     are man's essential nature.

*Mǎ Fū Ch'u*, *The Three-Character Rhymed Classic on the Ka'bah*; cf. TCK p.182

See also: **T'ien** (4.1).

**tanzīl** (A/P) *Lit.* a sending down, a coming down, a descent; hence also, a revelation; mystically, the descent of the divine Command into creation. The term is derived from verb forms of the term which appear in the *Qur'ān*. Through the descent of His Command, God is in touch with all realms of the creation; He “comprehends all things” and “has power over all things”:

*Allāh* is He who created the seven firmaments (*sab'a samāwāt*),  
     and of the earth a similar number.  
 Through the midst of them (all)  
     descends (*yatanazzalu*) His Command (*al-Amr*):  
 That you may know that *Allāh* has power over all things,  
     and that *Allāh* comprehends all things in (His) knowledge.

*Qur'ān* 65:12; cf. AYA

The divine message is also “revealed” or, literally, ‘sent down’, together with the angels and the Spirit who enact the divine Command and reveal His message:

We have indeed revealed (*anzalnāhu*) this (message)  
 in the Night of Power.  
 And what will explain to you  
 what the Night of Power is?  
 The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.  
 Therein come down (*tanazzalu*) the angels and the Spirit  
 by *Allāh*’s permission on every errand.

*Qur’ān* 97:1–4; cf. AYA

See also: **al-Amr**, **al-Ḥukm**, **tanazzul** (4.1).

**Tào (Đào) (C)** See **Tào** (2.2).

**Thought, Thought of God, Thought of His Heart, Thought of Knowledge, Thought of the Father, Thought of Truth** Thought is a part of human mental functioning; the act or process of thinking, deliberation, consideration and so on. The term is also used in translation for various expressions used by the gnostics and others for the creative Power as the Mind, Intelligence or Thought of God.

The use of terms such as Mind and Thought should not be confused in this context with uses of the term ‘mind’ in relationship to the negative power or universal mind. As terms for the creative Power, Thought and Mind refer to the intelligent Essence from which action proceeds. Just as there is no human life without thought, similarly there is no creation without the ‘divine Thought’. Just as all human actions have their origins in human thought, however fleeting, so too do God’s ‘actions’ – the creation – have their source in His ‘Thought’, His ‘Mind’, His creative Power. But, naturally, God does not ‘think’ or ‘speak’ as human beings do. Its use in this context is metaphorical.

The writer of the early Christian devotional poems, the *Odes of Solomon*, is very fond of the metaphor. He speaks, for instance, of the Word or the “Thought of His Heart” as the means by which the “*aeons* (realms and powers) were made”:

There is nothing that is outside of the Lord,  
 for He was before anything came into being.



And the *aeons* were made by His Word,  
and by the Thought of His Heart.

*Odes of Solomon 16:18–19*

In another ode, he speaks specifically of hearing the “Thought of Knowledge”, and this lifts him out of the realm of “Error” and bestows “salvation”:

Ears have become mine,  
and I have heard His Truth.  
I have received the Thought of Knowledge,  
and, through it, I have lived fully.  
The way of Error I have discarded,  
and have walked towards Him,  
and have received salvation from Him, ungrudgingly.

*Odes of Solomon 15:4–6*

He also writes that he has been raised up from the darkness of the world and taken up into the light of the Lord: “And supremely helpful to me was the Thought of the Lord,”<sup>1</sup> adding, in another ode, that he has been guided by the “Thought of Truth”.<sup>2</sup> In another poem, he says that he was “born” – has received the new birth of mystic baptism – from the Father’s “treasure ... and the Thought of His Heart”. And this spiritual rebirth is immediately linked to the Word and the Saviour:

For the Father of Truth remembered me –  
He who possessed me from the beginning.  
For from His treasure was I born,  
and the Thought of His Heart.  
And His Word is with us all along our way,  
the Saviour who gives life  
does not reject our souls.

*Odes of Solomon 41:9–11*

The *Odes of Solomon* have sometimes been classified as gnostic, and in the sense that they speak continuously of the mystic path of divine revelation, this is true. Certainly, the Thought of God is a term commonly encountered in texts generally reckoned to be gnostic. In the *Paraphrase of Shem*, for instance, where – following the established style of the times – God is ‘speaking’, the Master, the Son and the Voice are all identified with each other as arising from the “infinite” and “immeasurable Thought” of the Father:

My likeness, the Son of the Majesty,  
is from my infinite Thought,

since I am for him a universal likeness  
which does not lie (which is above illusion)...

His appearance is in my beautiful garment of light  
which is the Voice of the immeasurable Thought.

*Paraphrase of Shem 12, NHS30 pp.48–49*

The Son is of the image or likeness of God, which is above all unreality, above all illusion. Though the Son is a manifestation or “appearance” of the Infinite, he remains merged into the Lord’s “beautiful garment of light” and the “Voice” of the highest essence.

Similarly, in some ringing passages from the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, where it is the supreme Lord who is ‘speaking’, the “Thought” is again equated with the “Voice”:

I am a Voice speaking softly.  
I exist from the first.  
I dwell within the Silence....  
And it is the hidden Voice that dwells within me,  
within the incomprehensible, immeasurable Thought,  
within the immeasurable Silence....

I am the One who gradually  
put forth (emanated) the All (the creation) by my Thought....  
I am perception (enlightenment) and knowledge,  
uttering a Voice by means of Thought....

I am the Thought of the Father  
and through me proceeded the Voice,  
that is, the knowledge of everlasting things....

I revealed myself ... among those who recognize me.  
For it is I who am joined with everyone  
by virtue of the ... exalted Voice,  
even a Voice from the invisible Thought.

*Trimorphic Protennoia 35:32–34, 36:1–2, 7–9, 12–14, 17–19, 22–26, NHS28 pp.402–5*

Use of terms such as “Thought” for the creative emanation of God is probably Greek in origin. Greek mystics and philosophers, for example, commonly spoke of the creative Power as the divine *Nous* (Intelligence, Mind) or *Logos* (Reason). In fact, terms such as *Ennoia*, *Epinoia*, *Protennoia* and *Pronoia* are all derived from the same root as *Nous*. In the gnostic *Thought of Norea*, in a song of praise to the supreme Father, the “*Ennoia* (Thought)

of the Light” is equated with the “Voice”, the *Logos* and the “*Nous*”, the primal divine Intelligence. In this passage, the All refers to the hierarchy of creation with its host of higher realms and subpowers:

Father of the All, *Ennoia* (Thought) of the Light,  
*Nous* dwelling in the heights above the (regions) below,  
 Light dwelling in the heights,  
 Voice of Truth, upright *Nous*, untouchable *Logos*,  
 and ineffable Voice, incomprehensible Father!

*Thought of Norea 27, NHS15 pp.94–95*

Many centuries later, similar terms were still in use for the creative Power. The medieval *Zohar*, for instance, also portrays the creation of the realms or worlds as the emanation of the “Thought (*Maḥshavah*)” or “Wisdom (*Hokhmah*)” of God. The author emphasizes that each realm is a reflection – a vibration at a lower intensity – of the one above:

Rabbi Simeon said: “Alas for humanity, for they do not see and they do not understand. When it arose in Thought (*Maḥshavah*) before the Holy One, blessed be He, to create His world, all the worlds arose in one Thought (*Maḥshavah*), and with this Thought (*Maḥshavah*) they were all created. This is the meaning of ‘With Wisdom (*Hokhmah*) have You made them all’.<sup>3</sup> And with this Thought (*Maḥshavah*), which is Wisdom (*Hokhmah*), this world and the world above were created.”

*Zohar 2:20a, Midrash ha-Ne’elam, WZ2 p.569*

See also: **al-‘Aql al-Awwal, Maḥshavah, Mind, Nous.**

1. *Odes of Solomon* 21:5.
2. *Odes of Solomon* 17:5.
3. *Psalms* 104:24.

**tiryāq** (A/P), **tiryāk** (P) *Lit.* a theriaca, a special remedy, an antidote against poison, a composition of many ingredients; from the Greek, *theriakē*; also, wine, opium; in Persian, a mythical stone that absorbs or expels poison. In medieval works on Arabian medicine the term *tiryāq*, originally an antidote to the bite of venomous beasts, is applied to a panacea made up of various ingredients.

The best kind of theriac, because it makes a distinction between disease and health, is called *tiryāq-i fārūqī* – a discriminating remedy, *fārūq* meaning wisdom or discrimination. *Fārūq* was also a title bestowed on the Caliph,

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, by the Prophet. According to a traditional story, the Byzantine Emperor dispatched an ambassador to ‘Umar with many valuable presents. Included among them was a container of deadly poison. “What is this?” queried ‘Umar, examining the container.

“A single drop of it, given to your enemy, will kill him on the spot,” replied the Emperor’s ambassador.

‘Umar immediately put the cup to his lips and emptied it, saying, “My worst enemy is my self (*nafs*).”<sup>1</sup>

Alluding to this story, Rūmī uses a play on the word *fārūqī* (wisdom, discrimination) – as the antidote (*tiryāq*) to the poison of worldliness:

Every existence that emerged from Nonexistence  
 is poison to one and sugar to another.  
 Be a friend (of truth), get rid of unsweet qualities,  
 so that you may eat sugar even from a jar of poison.  
 A (deadly) poison did no harm to *Fārūq* (‘Umar)  
 because to him the antidote (*tiryāq*), discrimination (*fārūqī*),  
 was sweet as candy.

Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* V:4236–38; cf. *MJR*6 p.253

In other mystical traditions, the panacea that can cure all ills is said to be the divine creative power.

See also: **Medicine of Life**.

1. R.A. Nicholson, *Commentary on Maṣnavī* III:4238, *MJR*8 pp.306–7.

**Torah** (He) *Lit.* teaching, doctrine, instruction; commonly translated as Law, revelation; specifically, the *Pentateuch* – the first five books of the Bible (*Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*) – which, according to tradition, were revealed to the prophet Moses on Mount Sinai; also, used loosely, for the entire Hebrew Bible, consisting of the *Pentateuch* and the twenty-one other books under the two broad categories of the ‘Prophets’ and the ‘Writings (*Hagiographa*)’; also, the entire body of Jewish traditional teachings, including the oral law.

The *Torah* makes its first appearance in *Exodus*. According to the story, *Yahweh* gives the *Torah* (His religious and social teachings) to Moses on Mount Sinai, which He then inscribes with His finger on two tablets of stone. Moses carries the tablets down the mountain, but when he sees the Israelites making ready to worship a golden calf, he throws the tablets to the ground in anger, breaking them. Later, God redoes His handiwork on two new tablets which Moses carries up the mountain for that purpose, according to

God's instructions. It is from this story that the other meanings of the *Torah* have developed.<sup>1</sup>

Understood mystically, the *Torah* is the revelation to Moses of the creative, immanent divine Power, the Word (*Davar*, *Memra*) or Voice (*Kol*) of God, through whose expression or utterance the creation took place. It is also the discipline or path of meditation on that inner teaching or Word.

Though the *Torah* undoubtedly refers to the outer books and teachings, it is also used to mean the higher Law or Command of God in creation – the creative Power. In fact, Jewish mystics have always viewed the *Torah* mystically and symbolically, not just literally. They see it as “the living incarnation of the divine Wisdom which eternally sends out new rays of light”.<sup>2</sup> They believe that the literal *Torah* is to be viewed as a garment, a covering, of the inner, deeper teaching that it embodies.

The *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach* (written c.190 BCE) identifies the *Torah* with Wisdom (*Hokhmah*), the creative Power of God that pre-existed the creation. Having extensively described the wonders and beauties of Wisdom, the author observes that this is the real “Book of the Covenant” and the “Law (*Torah*)” of Moses:

All this is no other  
than the Book of the Covenant of the Most High God,  
the Law (*Torah*) that Moses enjoined on us,  
an inheritance for the communities of Jacob.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 24:23, JB*

In a similar vein, he says that earnestly seeking and meditating on Wisdom is the same as grasping the *Torah*. Such people will obtain Wisdom. Wisdom is a feminine noun, here personified as female:

Whoever fears the Lord will act like this,  
and whoever grasps the Law (*Torah*) will obtain Wisdom.  
She will come to meet him like a mother,  
and receive him like a virgin bride.  
She will give him the Bread of Understanding to eat,  
and the Water of Wisdom to drink.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 15:1–3, JB*

Here, the *Torah* is identified as much with the path to obtaining Wisdom, as with Wisdom itself. In another passage, he speaks of the futility of divinations and the interpretation of dreams and omens, describing them as “falsehood”. Following the path of Wisdom or “fulfilling the *Torah*”, he says, does not involve a person in practices of such a nature:

For dreams have led many astray,  
 and those building their hopes on them  
 have been disappointed.  
 Fulfilling the Law (*Torah*) requires no such falsehood,  
 and Wisdom is most perfectly expressed by truthful lips.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 34:7–8, JB*

He also says that one who follows the path of the *Torah* will gain control of his lower nature:

Whoever keeps the Law (*Torah*) will master his instincts.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 21:11, JB*

Jesus ben Sirach is writing at a time when it was necessary for him to be seen as conforming to Jewish tradition. Heresy was punishable by death or exile. When speaking of the *Torah*, therefore, he writes in such a way that the *Torah* can be interpreted either literally or mystically:

The man who trusts in the Law (*Torah*)  
 pays attention to the commandments;  
 The man who has confidence in the Lord  
 will come to no harm.  
 If a man fears the Lord, evil will not come his way:  
 again and again he will be rescued in his trials.  
 The man who hates the Law (*Torah*) is not wise;  
 If hypocritical in observance,  
 he is like a ship in a storm.  
 A man of understanding will put his faith in the Law (*Torah*):  
 for him the Law (*Torah*) is as dependable as an oracle.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 32:24–33, JB*

And similarly:

Thanks to her I have advanced;  
 The glory be to Him who has given me Wisdom!  
 For I am determined to put her into practice,  
 I have earnestly pursued what is good,  
 I will not be put to shame.  
 My soul has fought to possess her,  
 I have been scrupulous in keeping the Law (*Torah*);  
 I have stretched out my hands to heaven,  
 and bewailed my ignorance of her;  
 I have directed my soul towards her,  
 and in purity have found her;

Having my heart fixed on her from the outset,  
 I shall never be deserted;  
 My very core having yearned to discover her,  
 I have now acquired a good possession.  
 In reward, the Lord has given me a tongue  
 with which I shall sing His praises.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 51:17–22, JB*

Here, he concludes by saying that having acquired the experience of Wisdom, God has given him the inspiration to write about it. Again, his path to Wisdom has included being “scrupulous in keeping the *Torah*” – an allusion that can be understood either as the requirements of the mystic path, or as the outer religious observances of Judaism.

The *Torah* is described in a similar manner in a number of biblical books, especially those of the prophets, and in some of the psalms. Although not explicitly equating the *Torah* with the creative Power, these writings make good sense when understood that way. As the first psalm says, happiness and good character accompany the man whose “delight is in the *Torah*” and who “meditates” on it “day and night”:

Blessed is the man who does not walk  
 in the counsel of the wicked,  
 nor stands in the way of sinners,  
 nor sits in the seat of scorners.  
 But his delight is in the *Torah* of the Lord,  
 and in his *Torah* he meditates day and night.  
 And he shall be like a tree planted by streams of water  
 that brings forth its fruit in its season;  
 Its leaf also shall not wither,  
 and in whatever he does he shall prosper.  
 Not so the wicked: but they are like the chaff,  
 which the wind drives away.

*Psalms 1:1–3, KB*

The *Torah* is also “perfect”, bringing new life to the soul:

The *Torah* of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.

*Psalms 19:8, KB*

In a long psalm in praise of the *Torah*, the writer, describing himself as an “exile ... on earth”, says that the *Torah* brings happiness, conceals hidden “marvels”, turns a person away from “delusion”, is equivalent to the “Name”, can be observed “all night”, is more precious than “all the gold and silver in

the world”, can be meditated on “all day”, is associated with God’s “eternal righteousness”, and – he concludes – is his sole “delight”. All these are essential characteristics of the mystic *Torah* as the creative Power:

Ah, how happy those of blameless life  
 who walk in the Law (*Torah*) of *Yahweh*! ...  
 Open my eyes: I shall concentrate  
 on the marvels of Your Law (*Torah*).  
 Exile though I am on earth,  
 do not hide Your commandments from me....  
 Turn me from the path of delusion,  
 grant me the grace of Your Law (*Torah*)....

Where I live in exile,  
 Your statutes are psalms for me.  
 All night, *Yahweh*, I remember Your Name  
 and observe Your Law (*Torah*)....  
 I put the Law (*Torah*) You have given  
 before all the gold and silver in the world....  
 Meditating all day on Your Law (*Torah*),  
 how I have come to love it! ...

I would lay down my life at any moment,  
 I have never yet forgotten Your Law (*Torah*)....  
 Your righteousness is eternal righteousness,  
 Your Law (*Torah*) holds true for ever....

I long for You, *Yahweh*, my saviour,  
 Your Law (*Torah*) is my delight.  
 Long may my soul live to praise You,  
 long be Your rulings my help!  
 I am wandering like a lost sheep;  
 Come and look for Your servant.  
 No, I have never forgotten Your commandments.

*Psalms 119:1, 18–19, 29, 54–55, 72, 97, 109, 142, 174–76, JB*

While neither Jesus ben Sirach nor the psalms were definitive as to the mystic nature of the *Torah*, many of the later Jewish mystics and rabbis spoke openly about it. The great Rabbi Akiva (c.50–135 CE) described the *Torah* as “the precious instrument by which the world was created”.<sup>3</sup> He also said: “The fundamental principle of the *Torah* is the commandment, ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself.’”<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Hoshaiiah also explicitly identifies the *Torah* with Wisdom, the divine companion and creative Power described in



*Proverbs*.<sup>5</sup> He depicts God as creating the world by consulting the *Torah*, just as an architect builds a palace by consulting drawings.<sup>6</sup>

Taking the meaning in a more general sense, yet still acknowledging that the *Torah* is more than outward teachings and religious observances, some rabbis compared it to *manna*, the Tree of Life, milk, honey, wine, drugs, water, fire, and to many other things. It was regarded as the source of freedom, goodness and life,<sup>7</sup> and was identified with human love and wisdom.<sup>8</sup>

Other rabbis taught that the *Torah* was created prior to the creation of the world. Rabbi Eliezer ben Yose the Galilean said that for 974 generations before the world was created, the *Torah* lay in the bosom of God, joining ministering angels in song.<sup>9</sup> Others had similar, seemingly mythical, notions.

Later Jewish mystics also understood the *Torah* in a mystical manner. The medieval *Zohar*, the primary work of the Kabbalah, relates:

Rabbi Simeon said: "Alas for the man who regards the *Torah* as a book of mere tales and profane matters.... In reality, the words of the *Torah* are higher words and higher mysteries. Even when the angels come down into the world, they don the garment of this world, and if they did not, they could not survive in this world, and the world could not endure them.... So, likewise, the *Torah* has a body, which consists of the commandments and ordinances of the *Torah*, which are called *gufei Torah* (bodies of the *Torah*). This body is cloaked in garments, which consist of worldly stories.

"Fools see only the garment, which is the narrative part of the *Torah*; they know no more, and fail to see what is under the garment. Those who know more see not only the garment, but also the body that is under the garment. But the truly wise, the servants of the supreme King, those who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai (the mystics, who experienced God's revelation), look only upon the soul, which is the true foundation of the entire *Torah*, and one day, indeed, it will be given them to behold the innermost soul of the *Torah*."

*Zohar* 3:152a; cf. in *JSI* pp.324–25

And again, quoting the first psalm:

How happy is the lot of the man who is continually preoccupied with the *Torah*. What does Scripture say about the man who studies it? "His delight is in the *Torah* of the Lord, and in His *Torah* does he meditate day and night, and he shall be like a tree...."<sup>10</sup> What is the connection between one and the other?

Whoever studies the *Torah* day and night will not be like a shrivelled tree, but "like a tree planted by streams of water". Just as a tree

has roots, bark, pith, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit – these seven parts amounting to seven (times) ten, to seventy – so the words of the *Torah* have literal meaning, homiletical meaning, speculative allusions, *gematriot* (numerical symbolism), hidden mysteries, ineffable mysteries, one above the other, unfit and fit, unclean and clean, forbidden and permitted. The branches spread out from here on every side. He shall be like a veritable tree; and, if not, then he is not a master of wisdom.

*Zohar 3:200b–202a, WZ1 p.144*

The Kabbalists understood the *Torah* as a tapestry of esoteric symbolism referring to the system of the ten *sefirot*, the successive emanations of divine qualities or the gradations of the divine Light by which they understood the creation to have taken place, and by means of which the soul returned to God. They viewed every word – even every letter – of the *Torah* as a reference to the *sefirot*. The seven branches of the *menorah*, for instance, symbolizing the Tree of Life, are understood to correspond to the seven lower *sefirot*. Each one of these seven *sefirot* contains all ten sefirotic stages, making seventy parts in all, corresponding to the traditional ‘seventy facets’ of the *Torah*.

See also: **Covenant, Law, menorah** (4.1).

1. *Exodus* 20:1ff.
2. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, MTJM p.14.
3. *Babylonian Talmud*, Avot 3:14, in “Torah”, EJCD.
4. *Leviticus* 19:18; *Sifra*, Kedoshim 4:12; *Jerusalem Talmud*, Nedarim 9:3.41c; *Midrash Rabbah*, *Genesis* 24:7.
5. *Proverbs* 1–9, *passim*.
6. *Midrash Rabbah*, *Genesis* 1:1.
7. *Pirkei Avot* 6:1–12.
8. *Midrash Rabbah*, *Psalms* 1:18.
9. e.g. *Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* 1, FRN p.31; cf. *Midrash Rabbah*, *Genesis* 28:4.
10. *Psalms* 1:2–3.

**Tree, Tree of Immortality, Tree of Life** (He. *‘Ez Hayyim*), **Tree of Glory, Tree of the Law-Nature, Tree of Nature and Life, Tree of Radiance, Tree of Rest** The Tree of Life is an ancient term for the creative Power, used by mystics throughout the East, but especially in the Middle East and ancient Mesopotamia. The term has had a long history in mystical and mythological traditions, its first traces being discernible among the earliest

known records of literate civilizations of the Middle East. In later times, it spread both east and west through the advance of Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism and Islam, where it relates back to the *Genesis* creation allegory, written around the ninth century BCE, and based on earlier Mesopotamian imagery still current at that time. The well-known story reads:

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden,  
 and there He put the man whom He had formed.  
 And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow  
 every tree that is pleasant to the sight,  
 and good for food:  
 The Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden,  
 and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.  
 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden.

*Genesis 2:8–10, KJV*

Here, Eden is symbolic of God's eternity within which is planted the garden of creation. In this garden is the Tree of Life, and a river flows out of Eden to nourish the garden planted in Eden. Both the Tree of Life and the river symbolize the divine creative power. The Tree of Life is the stable centre from which all created life comes into being, like branches on a tree. The Living Water that flows in the river brings life to the creation, like water to the desert. The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is also planted in this garden, representing the realm of the devil or negativity, where division and duality prevail.

In the arid environment inhabited by the seminomadic, agricultural peoples of the ancient Middle East, the symbol of the Tree of Life is appropriate. In a land where water is scarce and vegetation is precious, the tree becomes a symbol of life and renewal – of nourishment flowing from the source. The Tree of Life represents the nourishment of the Spirit, while the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil represents the level of the mind.

Although the image of the Tree is used mystically in a number of ways, its primary meaning, especially in the more ancient texts, is usually that of the creative Power. But the possibilities for the elaboration of the metaphor are considerable, and the fertile and lyrical minds of the ancient Middle Eastern poets made full use of them all.

Firstly, a tree grows with a strong and straight trunk. From its trunk arise branches, limbs and leaves. The trunk is therefore a natural symbol for the creative Power as the support of all creation. Its branches are the many levels and regions of creation, or sometimes they symbolize the souls in creation. On occasion, they refer to the Masters – since all spring from the same source – the main trunk.

A tree, too, with its extensive foliage and branches, grows from a root. As a consequence, the root was used as a simile for the source of something, as in the expression ‘the root of the matter’. God or the creative Power were hence described as the Root, the Root of Life, the Root of immortality and so on. As the root of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the metaphor was also used for the root of all illusion, multiplicity and negativity in creation, commonly called Deception, Error and Corruption in early Christian and gnostic literature.

The *Genesis* myth is not the earliest recorded use of this metaphor. The *Genesis* stories were Mesopotamian in origin, the land of earlier Sumerian and Semitic cultures. The Plant, the Herb or the Tree of Life, together with the River (of Living Water), are present in the literature of ancient Mesopotamia, found on hundreds of thousands of clay tablets amid the excavated ruins of cities such as Lagash, Nippur and Nineveh, where the library of the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal (ruled 668–627 BCE) was discovered. The Tree of Life is also a popular motif on Mesopotamian pottery. These were common Middle Eastern metaphors long before any biblical books were written or compiled.

Many Sumerian legends are preserved only as fragments or hints of a fuller story, long since lost. Images of some of these are also found on pottery and other artefacts. A Sumerian roll cylinder preserved in the British Museum, for example, shows a woman and a man seated before a tree in what is clearly a representation of the first temptation. The man, like Adapa, the Sumerian precursor to Adam, wears the horned headdress of a god or deified man, and behind the woman stands a serpent. Images of this kind remained traditional long after Sumerian times. Among the painted pottery of Susa, an important Persian city of Sassanian times (224–651 CE), are designs of the Tree of Life around which is coiled a serpent, and of a naked woman behind whom stands a serpent.<sup>1</sup>

The Tree or Plant of Life was thus a part of the common cultural mythology of those times, and it is no surprise to find that the Plant of Life was even identified as a particular healing plant, the *kishkanu* tree, though the species has never been positively identified. The *kishkanu* tree was probably grown in temple groves or courtyards – a perfect example of the externalization of a myth. Thus, the Sumerian ruler, Sumu-ilu, left this public inscription at a temple built for the goddess *Nin-Isin*:

To *Nin-Isin*, he gave ... the fine garden,  
where a plant is growing, the Plant of Life.

*Sumerian Inscription*, NRO pp.69–70, RISA pp.312–13; cf. KTL p.10

In another Sumerian text, a *kishkanu* tree, described in mythological terms, is depicted as growing near streams of water flowing in a garden in Eridu.

Here again, there is both a mythical and an external meaning, for Eridu, cultic centre of *Enki*, god of wisdom, was a major city in southern Sumeria. In addition to *kishkanu* trees grown in the temple groves, it is likely that man-made cult trees, decorated with metal and precious stones, were also erected:

In Eridu, there is a black *kishkanu* tree,  
growing in a sacred place;  
Its appearance is lapis lazuli,  
erected on the *Apsū*.  
*Enki* (lord of wisdom), when walking there,  
fills Eridu with abundance.

In the resting place is the chamber of *Nammu*.  
In its holy temple there is a grove,  
casting its shadow, wherein no man may enter.  
*Sumerian Text, CTB XVI:46; cf. DES pp.200–3, KTL pp.5–6*

All this demonstrates the prevalence of the Tree of Life as a mythological symbol in the popular mind. But among the ancient Mesopotamian epics and legends there are also passages suggesting that parts of them may at one time have been allegories of mystic truth. In one of the episodes from the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, one of the most long-lived of great epic adventure stories, the semidivine hero, Gilgamesh, son of a goddess and a priest, goes in search of wisdom which he finds at the Fountain of Youth, another symbol used for the Living Waters of the Word.

On his travels, he has to journey through passes and mountains, overpowering and killing lions that dance in the moonlight, coming at last to a garden of trees bearing jewelled fruit, probably a precursor to the garden of Eden. Possibly, in the yet more distant past, the events of the journey of Gilgamesh symbolized the inner journey of the soul to its divine home. Certainly, from its description, one of the trees in the garden encountered by Gilgamesh must be the sacred Vine of Life, precursor to the Tree of Life planted in Eden:

Like carnelian are the fruit it bears,  
all hung about with tendrils.  
Fair to gaze upon, lapis lazuli the foliage is,  
and the fruit it bears, desirable to the eye.  
*Epic of Gilgamesh IX:5.48–51; cf. EGT p.43, KTL p.7*

The mystical implications of these glimpses of a largely lost mythology may be uncertain. But in biblical literature, there are places where the Tree of

Life is certainly equated with the creative Power or Wisdom (a feminine noun), as in *Proverbs*:

Happy the man who discovers Wisdom,  
 the man who gains discernment....  
 She is a Tree of Life for those who hold her fast,  
 those who cling to her live happy lives....  
 By Wisdom, *Yahweh* set the earth on its foundations.

*Proverbs 3:13–19, JB*

In later Judaism, the Tree of Life was used as a metaphor for the *Torah* (Law) in prayers based on biblical passages, such as the one from *Proverbs*:

I have given you good teaching,  
 forsake not my *Torah*;  
 It is a Tree of Life to those who hold on to her,  
 all who uphold it are happy.  
 Its ways are ways of joy,  
 and all its paths are peace.

*Jewish Prayer Book, PB p.170; cf. Proverbs 3:1, 18, 17*

The writer of the prayer may or may not have understood both the *Torah* and Tree of Life as metaphors for the creative Power. Nevertheless, the prayer captures the essence of the mystic truth.

Often – as in these instances – the Tree of Life was not identified as any particular species. But where it was, the particular characteristics of that tree were also employed in the elaboration of the metaphor. The cedar of Lebanon, for instance, noted for its fragrance and broad root systems, conveyed the idea of the spiritual protection afforded by the Tree of Life. The term ‘fragrance’, too, was a metaphor for the creative Power, particularly since the words for wind, breath, spirit and fragrance were either the same or derived from the same root in many ancient Middle Eastern languages.

Then there is the Hebrew word, *ra‘anan*, a general name for all green and leafy trees. In some places in the Bible, *ra‘anan* is translated as the cypress tree, but it really means the refreshing and life-giving qualities of any tree – and, metaphorically, the Tree of Life. The imagery draws upon the sustaining, refreshing and life-giving qualities of the divine Word. Similarly, the fruit at the top of the date palm and especially on the vine, with its fragrant spring flowers and abundant clusters of fruit, are both symbolic of the spiritual goal or fruit of life.

In fact, throughout Middle Eastern mystic literature, the Tree of Life is cast as a wide variety of species – blossoming, fragrant, fruitful, pure,

nourishing, tall, stately and so on – as the poet required for his particular elaboration of the meaning. In a passage where Wisdom is herself speaking, Jesus ben Sirach says that she is as beautiful and fragrant as a rose, as fine and pure as the olive tree from which clear oil is pressed, and as tall as the cypress, the cedar, the palm tree or the plane tree, reaching up to God Himself. She has also – he adds – “taken root in a privileged people”, in the Lord’s property, “in his inheritance” – the allusion is to the chosen sheep, those destined to follow the path of Wisdom:

I have taken root in a privileged people,  
     in the Lord’s property, in his inheritance.  
 I have grown tall as a cedar on Lebanon,  
     as a cypress on Mount Hermon;  
 I have grown tall as a palm in Eyn-gedi,  
     as the rose bushes of Jericho,  
     as a fine olive in the plain –  
 As a plane tree I have grown tall.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 24:12–14, JB*

He also says that Wisdom’s branches are spread as wide as a terebinth tree, and that she is like a vine with “graceful shoots” whose blossom bears the “fruit of glory and wealth”. The fruit of this divine vine is the sweetness of divine light and glory, bringing great spiritual wealth to the soul who knows Wisdom. In this passage, it is Wisdom who is ‘speaking’:

I have spread my branches like a terebinth,  
     and my branches are glorious and graceful.  
 I am like a vine putting out graceful shoots,  
     my blossoms bear the fruit of glory and wealth.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 24:16–17, JB*

Jesus ben Sirach’s array of tree species is probably equalled only by the writer of the *Song of Songs*, whose suite of poems also makes extensive metaphorical use of trees, shrubs and plants of a variety of species – apples, nuts (in the nut orchard), figs, pomegranates, cinnamon, cedars, cypresses, vines and date palms. Probably all of these have individual metaphorical significance. In some instances, souls themselves are symbolized as vines or palm trees. Other uses seem to be allusions to the creative Power, symbolized as the Tree of Life.

The nut orchard<sup>2</sup> is a symbol of this world, the domain of human beings, where the spiritual fruit is enclosed in the hard, impenetrable shell of matter, or is to be found within the hard skull of the human head. Likewise, the fruit of the date palm<sup>3</sup> is both delicious and nutritious, like the spiritual food

of communion with the creative Power, while the shape of the tree indicates the steepness and difficulty of the spiritual ascent required to obtain it. Perhaps, too, the fruit on a tall trunk is used to signify that the spiritual food is to be found within the human head, when the attention has been withdrawn from the body or trunk. The fragrance of cinnamon and mandrake<sup>4</sup> signify the intoxication of mystic experience of the Tree of Life. The impressive height and shape of the cedar and the cypress, used in the construction of the divine Beloved's house,<sup>5</sup> represent the sublime presence of the creative Power penetrating all creation, providing life, shade and refuge to all souls.

The sweetness and abundance of the fruit of the apple<sup>6</sup> and the vine<sup>7</sup> symbolize the bliss and spiritual satisfaction of true contact with the creative Power. Among all the souls in the orchard of this world, the mystic Beloved – the Master – has the sweetest fruit and gives the best shelter and protection from the heat of the sun – the fire of human passions and imperfections. Hence, the lover (the soul) says:

As an apple tree among the trees of the orchard,  
so is my Beloved among the young men.  
In his longed-for shade I am seated,  
and his fruit is sweet to my taste.

*Song of Songs 2:3, JB*

The introduction of these images adds great colour and variety to the *Song of Songs*, and almost all of them stem from the family of metaphors associated with the Tree of Life, either as God's creative Power or as the individual soul.

The meaning of the allusions in the *Song of Songs*, though poetic, is uncertain, although its allegorical interpretation is traditional in both Judaism and Christianity. Elsewhere, however, the meaning of the metaphor is made perfectly clear. The writer of the *Book of Revelation*, for example, uses the metaphor of the Tree of Life in conjunction with that of the Living Water when he says:

Blessed are they that do his commandments,  
that they may have right to the Tree of Life,  
and may enter in through the gates (the single eye)  
into the city (of God)....  
Let him that is athirst come.  
And whosoever will,  
let him take the Water of Life freely.

*Book of Revelation 22:14, 17, KJV*



Again, speaking of his angelic guide, he describes a vision of the “Tree of Life” which bears a different fruit every month, presumably symbolizing the eternal fruitfulness of this “Tree”:

And he shewed me a pure river of Water of Life,  
 clear as crystal,  
 proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.  
 In the midst of the street of it,  
 and on either side of the river,  
 was there the Tree of Life,  
 which bare twelve manner of fruits,  
 and yielded her fruit every month:  
 And the leaves of the Tree  
 were for the healing of the nations.

*Book of Revelation 22:1–2, KJV*

And again, in a passage where an angel ‘quotes’ what “the Spirit saith unto the churches (the communities of disciples)”:

To him that overcometh will I give to eat  
 of the Tree of Life,  
 which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

*Book of Revelation 2:7, KJV*

In these examples, it is evident that the image of the Tree of Life is drawn from *Genesis*, and is being interpreted as the bestower of eternal life. This is a primary characteristic of the creative Power.

In other early Christian writings, especially of the Eastern Church, there are a great many references to the Tree of Life as the Creative Word. The fourth-century Syrian, Ephraim Syrus, equates it with the source of the “Bread of Life”:

Come, let us cling to the Tree,  
 who gave us the Bread of Life.

*Ephraim Syrus, ESR p.354, MEM p.139*

A Syrian prayer speaks of the Tree of Life as the source of eternal life:

Grant me ... that I may find eternal life  
 when I partake of the Tree of Life  
 and the everlasting light with all your saints.

*Timothy, Patriarch of Alexandria, ATA pp.28–29, MEM p.133*

The gnostic Mandaean writers used the term in a number of variants such as the “Tree of Glory” and the “Living Tree”:

How beautiful is the Living Tree,  
and beautiful the birds (souls) that are on it!  
*Mandaean John-Book, JMM p.133, MEM p.148; cf. JM p.131*

And:

A Tree of Glory,  
from whose Fragrance everyone is living.  
Everyone who listens to its Discourse (Speech),  
his eyes fill with light.  
*Mandaean Ginza (Treasury); cf. GSBM p.59, MEM p.149*

In extant literature, however, it is probably the Manichaean psalms where the Tree of Life and its variants are most abundantly encountered. Both Jesus and Mānī were referred to and invoked as such:

Glory and victory to the Paraclete, our Lord, our light,  
Mānī, the Tree of Life, laden with joyous fruit.  
*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXIII; cf. MPB p.80*

Likewise, in a psalm that describes the oneness of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, using a variety of metaphors almost interchangeably, the “*Nous* of Light” is the creative Power as the primal, divine Intelligence within all things:

The Light that is on high is the Father,  
the Power of God that supports the universe is the Son,  
the Wisdom that springs forth is the Holy Spirit.  
Jesus, the Tree of Life, is the Father,  
the Fruit, the *Nous* of Light, is the Son,  
the Maiden (of Light), this sweet one, is the Holy Spirit.  
*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.116*

And again:

Praises be to you, O shining one, Mānī our guide,  
Root of enlightenment, Branch of Life,  
mighty Tree that is all healing.  
*Manichaean Text, in KF pp.333, 307 (n.236); cf. FN2 p.790, MEM p.155, MF pp.65, 96*

In another psalm, Jesus is equated with the “Living Water”, the “holy dove” and the “imperishable Tree”:

You are a Spring, O Jesus,  
     coming from the *aeons*, O King.  
 You are a Spring of Living Water,  
     the mysteries of the Father being revealed to you....  
 You are the flourishing fruit of the imperishable Tree.  
 You are the holy dove ...  
     that floats in the skies (the inner realms)....  
 Good the Tree, good the Fruit,  
     good also the sweet taste, too.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.185*

In another, the devotee prays for the opening of the Tree of Life – for contact with the divine Music within:

Open to me, O Tree of Life:  
     O Tree of Rest, open to me.  
 Open to me your essences that I may contemplate  
     the faces of the Holy Ones (the Masters).  
 Open to me your halls,  
     for my heart has been faint for thy joy.  
 Open to me your paradises,  
     that my spirit may receive your Fragrance.  
 My robe is ready,  
     that I may return to my Father rejoicing.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.154*

In another, the psalmist writes that the people of the world tried to appropriate this eternal, “unshakable Tree”, in the garb of formalized religion, but “they did not succeed”:

They arose, they that belong to Matter, the children of Error,  
     desiring to uproot your unshakable Tree,  
     and plant it in their land;  
 They strove at the matter, (but) they did not succeed,  
     those creatures of shame.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCXX; cf. MPB p.4*

The same term is freely encountered among the Manichaean Chinese texts from Chinese Turkestan, characterized by the fusion of terms from many religious and cultural backgrounds:

I respectfully worship, laud and praise  
 the ever flourishing Tree,  
 with numerous treasures, dignified, solemn,  
 and delicate beyond compare,  
 supreme in quality, developing to fill the world....  
 All the *Buddhas* (Saviours) come from its flowers;  
 All wisdom and kindness grow from its fruits.

*Manichaean Hymns, LSMH p.176:7–8*

And:

O ever flourishing precious Tree, the ocean of Nature and Life:  
 listen mercifully to my true petition.

*Manichaean Hymns, LSMH p.176:12*

Likewise, in an extract where the Saint, the “Tree of Nature and Life”, the “wonderful Medicine” and the “*Nous*” are all equated, and where the “Law-Nature” is also the Word as the inherent Law or the Command of God:

Beseechingly and longingly I cry;  
 I petition with a sincere heart:  
 O Tree of Nature and Life, with many treasures,  
 dignified and solemn,  
 the most high, incomparable King of wonderful Medicine,  
 the peaceful doer of pure deeds, perfect with much goodness,  
 the ever flourishing, precious Tree, the ocean of Nature and Life,  
 whose foundation is firm and strong, whose body is of diamond,  
 whose flowering trunk is real and true without exaggeration,  
 whose branches are long and great, and always gay,  
 whose leaves are merciful, all perfect with many treasures,  
 and whose fruits are always fresh with sweet dew, never fading:  
 Whoever eats them will forever  
 leave the current of birth and death;  
 Its perfuming fragrance pervades the whole universe!

Being already the great Saint, immortality is expected:  
 he can reanimate the ever thriving Tree of the Law-Nature.  
 Wise, kind, pure, modest and always awake,  
 he is truly the King of the *Nous* with unfailing wisdom.

*Manichaean Hymns; cf. LSMH p.182:72–75*

Later post-biblical Jewish mystics understood the Tree of Life as a metaphor for the inner journey of the soul back to God. The roots of this divine

Tree are with God, but its branches reach down to this world. Each branch represents a stage on the soul's ascent to eternal life. It is called the Tree of Life because eating its fruit nourishes the soul and leads to everlasting life. The path of the Tree of Life was also called the middle path, since it leads directly back to God, deviating neither to the right nor left.

Kabbalists taught that there is a correspondence between the successive levels or branches of this Tree of Life and the *sefirot*, the divine emanations that form creation and constitute the stages on the inner ascent.

The notion of the Tree of Life was also used by Christian theologians like Thomas Aquinas to represent God and angelic influences active in the world, which was translated into the concept of the Church and the nine orders of the Church hierarchy. The Freemasons depicted two trunks to the Tree of Life, representing its masculine and feminine aspects – active and passive forces – flowing down from heaven. Many scholars in Renaissance times sought a mystical understanding of the universe, and were familiar with the Kabbalah, especially the medieval *Zohar*, whose writer also found a mystical meaning to the Tree of Life. Most noted among them was Pico della Mirandola, of the Medici courts of Tuscany and Florence.

One section of the *Zohar*, the *Ra'aya Meheimna*, considers the Tree of Life to symbolize pure understanding of the *Torah*. Conversely, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is seen to represent Talmudic law, concerned with the external restrictions and prohibitions of Jewish life. Thus, the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses is understood as the ascent to the level of the Tree of Life, while the breaking of the tablets is the descent to the Tree of Knowledge, to the external rules that are so important to religion.

The time of the Messiah, teaches the *Zohar*, represents the dominance of the Tree of Life over the Tree of Knowledge, of mystic understanding over external ritual. Following the commandments based upon a mystical understanding is seen as adorning the *Torah* with light rather than the 'dark garb' of literalness. In the time of the Messiah, the inner holy aspect of the *Torah* will be revealed, and the outer garb will no longer be necessary.

The Jewish *menorah*, or candelabrum, with its seven or eight 'branches', often fashioned to resemble the branches of a tree, is also an ancient symbol of the Tree of Life, though this is largely unrecognized in contemporary times. The spiritual Master or adept was also understood by Jewish mystics to be an embodiment of the inverted Tree of Life. He functions in the physical universe, but his roots (soul) are above, with God. He is an embodiment of the Tree of Life and, like the *menorah*, the giver of light. The *Zohar* compares the spiritual teacher to a tree that grows alongside the Tree of Life:

Rabbi Isaac fell into a slumber and saw his father, who said to him: "How fortunate you are in this world and the next, for among the leaves of the Tree of Life in the garden of Eden is planted a tree that

is great and powerful in both worlds, and this is Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai. And now he holds you in his branches. How fortunate you are, my son!”

*Zohar 1:218a, WZJ p.136*

Metaphors likening the divine or the creative Power to a tree are not confined to the Middle East. The metaphor is present in ancient mystic literature of India. In the *Vedas*, the *Purāṇas* and the *Upanishads*, the Tree of Life appears as the *Ashvattha* Tree with its roots in *Brahman*, the absolute Reality, and its branches forming creation.

Around two thousand years later, the *Ādi Granth*, written in the time of the Mughul rule of India (1526–1761), which brought a strong Arabic and Persian influence to the Punjabi language of northern India, also uses the metaphor of a tree (*birkh*). Guru Nānak, who had travelled extensively in the Middle East, where he no doubt came into contact with mystics and mystical literature, uses the metaphor of a Tree of Immortality – the Tree of eternal Life – to symbolize the Lord and His “Fruit of Immortality”:

The Lord alone is the Nectar Tree (*Amrit Birkh*, Tree of Immortality),  
 which bears the ambrosial Fruit (*Amrit Phal*, Fruit of Immortality).  
 They who taste the nectareous Fruit (*Amrit Phal*)  
 remain sated with Truth.  
 They whose tongue enjoys divine Elixir (*Hari Ras*)  
 have no doubt and separation.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 421, MMS*

To eat the fruit of this Tree, he says elsewhere, the senses must cease flying out from the Tree.<sup>8</sup> Using similar imagery, Guru Amardās also writes that the soul who dwells in the “beautiful Tree” eats the “Fruit of Immortality (*Amrit Phal*)”.<sup>9</sup>

See also: **Amar Phal**, **Ashvattha**, **‘Ez Ḥayyim**, **Five Trees**, **pīpal** (▶2), **trees** (5.1), **True Vine**.

1. See S.N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, SMS pp.177–79.
2. *Song of Songs* 6:11.
3. *Song of Songs* 7:7–8.
4. *Song of Songs* 8:13.
5. *Song of Songs* 1:17.
6. *Song of Songs* 2:3–5.
7. *Song of Songs* 1:14, 2:13–15, 6:11, 7:12.
8. Guru Nānak, *Ādi Granth* 1033.
9. Guru Amardās, *Ādi Granth* 66.

**True Vine, First Vine, Vine, Vine of Life, Vine of souls** A variant of the Plant or Tree of Life metaphor used for the Word of God, the best known example of its use in the Christian world being found in John's gospel. Jesus says:

I am the True Vine, and my Father is the husbandman.  
Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away;  
And every branch that beareth fruit,  
    he purgeth (purifieth) it,  
    that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the Word  
    which I have spoken unto you:  
Abide in me, and I in you.  
As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,  
    except it abide in the vine,  
    no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the Vine, ye are the branches;  
He that abideth in me, and I in him,  
    the same bringeth forth much fruit:  
For without me ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me,  
    he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered;  
And men gather them, and cast them into the fire,  
    and they are burned.

If ye abide in me, and my words (Word) abide(s) in you,  
    ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.  
Herein is my Father glorified – that ye bear much fruit:  
    so shall ye be my disciples.

*John 15:1–8, KJV*

The writer of John's gospel has Jesus say that he is the True Vine, the Word, and his disciples are the branches. In fact, as a number of scholars have pointed out, the "I" and "me" that speaks in John's gospel is the *Logos*. As long as souls are attached to the vinestock, they can "bear much fruit". The souls who are attached to the True Vine are those who have been baptized or initiated into the Word. They are the ones who "abide in me". Without this baptism – an inner, mystic attunement of the soul to the Word – very little can be achieved. Hence, Jesus says, "without me ye can do nothing."

Those souls who are detached from the main trunk, on the other hand – those who have not received initiation into the Word – they are "withered"

and “cast ... into the fire, and they are burned”. They wither spiritually. Traditionally, their burning is understood as being cast into hell, but it could also mean that they have to return to this world of repeated birth and death where souls are roasted in the fires of discord and endless problems, soluble or otherwise.

This interpretation of the symbolism in John’s gospel is the way in which it was understood by many of those of a mystical understanding in early Christian times. The writer of the *Teachings of Silvanus* says:

Give yourself gladness from the True Vine of Christ. Satisfy yourself with the true wine in which there is no drunkenness nor dregs. For it (the true wine) marks the end of drinking since there is in it (the power) to give joy to the soul and the mind through the Spirit of God. But before you can drink of it, you must cultivate your meditation (*logismos*).

*Teachings of Silvanus* 107–8; cf. NHS30 pp.340–41

In this context, *logismos* means the practice of meditation on the *Logos*, listening to its divine Music within. In the *Acts of Thomas*, Judas Thomas speaks of experiences in the “world which is above”, meaning the higher regions of the soul. He refers to these experiences by means of a number of common metaphors and sayings that would have been familiar to his readers. Among these is the True Vine:

But we speak of the world which is above,  
 of God and angels, of watchers and Holy Ones,  
 of the immortal food and the draught of the True Vine;  
 Of raiment that endures and grows not old,  
 of things which eye has not seen nor ear heard,  
 neither have they entered into the heart of sinful men,  
 the things which God has prepared for them that love Him;  
 Of these things do we converse,  
 and of these do we bring good tidings.

*Acts of Thomas* 36; cf. AAA p.177, ANT p.382

The identification of the True Vine with the Tree of Life is endorsed by the writer of the Syriac version of the *Acts of Thomas*. The Greek, quoted above, speaks of the “immortal food and the draught of the True Vine”, while the Syriac version talks of

the immortal food of the Tree of Life  
 and of the Draught of Life.

*Acts of Thomas* III; cf. AAA p.177, MEM p.140



Again, identifying the Vine with the Tree of Life “planted ... in the earth”, the same writer speaks of Jesus’ ministry as a planting of this Vine on earth, referring to the baptism or initiation of souls while in human form. The “root” of this Vine, he says, is in the “depth” – a gnostic term for this world – while its branches are “in the Height”, with God. Its fruits are found on earth, for only man is truly able to eat its fruits, for only he can partake of its food and return to God:

I have planted your Vine in the earth;  
It has sent down its roots into the depth  
and its growth is spread out in the Height,  
and the fruits of it are stretched forth upon the earth,  
and they that are worthy of you are made glad by them,  
whom also you have gained.

*Acts of Thomas 146; cf. ANT p.428*

In the passage from John, Jesus – as the *Logos* – refers to himself as the Vine or True Vine, and in the various Christian apocryphal writings he is given the same epithet, along with many others. In the *Acts of Peter*, in reference to Jesus’ many parables and analogies, some of these designations are listed, among them being the Vine:

In this Jesus you have, brethren, the Door, the Light, the Way,  
the Bread, the Water, the Life, the Resurrection,  
the Refreshment, the Pearl, the Treasure, the Seed,  
the Abundance (harvest), the Mustard Seed, the Vine,  
the Plough, the Grace, the Faith, the Word:  
He is all things, and there is none other greater than he:  
unto him be praise, world without end.

*Acts of Peter XI–XX; cf. ANT p.322*

The identification of this mystic Vine with the Tree of Life is apparent in the Mandaean literature, where the Tree and the Vine are among the most commonly used mystic images. It is called the “Tree of Radiance”<sup>1</sup> and

the Vine which is All-Life  
and the great Tree which is all healing....  
The Stem of splendour, radiance, light and honour,  
whose branches are a thousand thousand,  
and its tendrils a myriad myriad.  
Well is it for him who has looked on that Tree!

*Mandaean Prayer Book 77; cf. CPM pp.84–85*

It is also

the great first secret Vine  
which loosed its nourishing juices  
into the habitations (heavenly realms).

*Mandaean Prayer Book 117; cf. CPM p.113*

And:

This is a Tree which is a Tree of Life,  
and a Vine, a Vine of Life!

*Mandaean Prayer Book 375, CPM p.269*

And describing the divine blessings experienced by those souls who come into contact with this mystic Vine:

You will rise up to the place  
which is the house of perfection ...  
You will wander freely in the spirit,  
and you will behold the sublime Vine of souls  
of which the Sons of the great family of Life  
are representatives.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 379; cf. CPM p.302*

The “Vine of souls” is the source of all souls, of all offshoots or lesser vines. It is the Tree of Life or the Word. The “Sons of the great family of Life” are the Saviours. They are the “representatives” of “the sublime Vine of souls”. Hence, in another passage, the Saviour promises the soul:

I will carry you upward, and show you the Vine  
that is standing outside the worlds.

*Mandaean Ginza (Treasury); cf. GSBM p.573, MEM p.149*

In the same text, the destiny of the baptized soul is described as beholding the “great Vine”, drinking of “its buds” and coming to dwell in the “world of light”:

He will behold the great Vine,  
that is lodging over the fruits  
of the predestined *Yawar* (Radiance).  
He will behold the great Vine,  
in whom the souls of the sucklings are brought up.  
They drink of its buds and exult,  
and their souls flourish;

Their souls flourish,  
and are established in the world of light.  
*Mandaean Ginza (Treasury); cf. GSBM p.327, MEM p.150*

And:

They opened for him the gate of the treasure house,  
lifted up for him the great curtain of Truth;  
They brought him in and showed him that Vine  
whose inner part is splendour, whose sides are light,  
whose heels are water, whose branches are *‘uthras* (spirits),  
whose leaves are the lanterns of light,  
and whose Seed is the great Root of souls.  
*Mandaean Ginza (Treasury); cf. GSBM p.429, MEM pp.151–52*

In other places, there are instances of Mandaean borrowings from Zoroastrian terminology, for the Vine is also called *Shrar* – a variation of *Sraosha*, which means Sound and was used in Persian as a term for the Tree of Life. It is used as such here, where *Shrar* is described as the “great, hidden First Vine”. The myriad souls and multiple ramifications of creation are then depicted as the many fruits and tendrils of this Vine:

I worship, I glorify and I praise this *Shrar*,  
the great, hidden First Vine,  
whose fruits are a thousand times one thousand,  
and whose tendrils are a myriad.  
I called him and he heard me.  
Again I will call him and he will hear me,  
so that he will come and heal me,  
and lift me up, and establish me, and raise me,  
and direct my eyes to the Light,  
and my feet to steadfastness,  
and my mouth to wisdom,  
and my heart to enlightenment.  
*Mandaean Prayer Book 117; cf. CPM pp.112–13, MEM p.148*

See also: **Tree of Life**.

1. *Mandaean Prayer Book 4, CPM p.4.*

**True Word See Word.**

**Udgīth(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* upward (*ud*) song (*gīthā*);<sup>1</sup> the Song from above, the Sound from above; the celestial or heavenly Song; the Song of the heavenly regions; the higher or heavenly Music; also the name of a hymn from the *Sāma Veda*. The term is used in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* for the creative Sound or Word, where it is also called *Om* or *Praṇava*:

Meditate upon the syllable *Om*, the *Udgītha*,  
for the *Udgītha* is sung, beginning with *Om*....  
The essence of the *Sāma (Veda)* is the *Udgītha*....  
That *Udgītha* is the essence of all essences,  
the supreme, the ultimate.

*Chhāndogya Upanishad 1:1.1–3*

And:

He who ... meditates on the syllable *Om*, the *Udgītha*,  
he indeed becomes a fulfiller of desires.

*Chhāndogya Upanishad 1:1.7*

The *Chhāndogya Upanishad* goes on to speak allegorically of the various ways in which people try to meditate on the *Udgītha*.<sup>2</sup> But demons sully their efforts, and they are unfruitful. Finally, meditation on the *Udgītha* as the *mukhya prāṇa* (principal breath, principal life energy) is tried, and this finally overcomes the demons:

Then they (the gods in the allegory)  
meditated on the *Udgītha*  
as the principal life energy (*mukhya prāṇa*).  
And when the demons attacked it, they were destroyed,  
just as a clod of earth striking a stone is shattered.

*Chhāndogya Upanishad 1:2.7*

The highest life energy is that of the true *Udgītha*, *Om* or Sound, and it seems that in this sense the *mukhya prāṇa* actually refers to the Sound Current, not the lower *prāṇas* of the body, as understood in *yoga* philosophy. The demons are the weaknesses and powers of the mind that are dispersed when confronted with the true *Udgītha*.

See also: **Om, Praṇava.**

1. *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14:4.1.25.

2. *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 1:2ff.

**Umm al-Kitāb** (A/P) *Lit.* Mother (*Umm*) of the Book (*al-Kitāb*); an expression from the *Qur’ān*:

*Allāh* blots out or confirms whatever He pleases:

With Him is the Mother of the Book (*Umm al-Kitāb*).

*Qur’ān* 13:39; cf. AYA

This “Mother of the Book” is believed by Muslims to be a prototype or blueprint in heaven of the *Qur’ān*, inscribed on the Well-Guarded Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*). Sufis have equated the *Umm al-Kitāb* (Mother of the Book) with the Primal Intelligence (*al-‘Aql al-Awwal*). It is said that the Supreme Pen (*al-Qalam al-‘Alá*) writes the story of creation on the Well-Guarded Tablet. It is there that the destiny of the world is ‘written’. The Mother of the Book is associated with this Supreme Pen and Well-Guarded Tablet. In a general sense, these are all metaphors for the divine creative power:

(*Umm al-Kitāb*) means the Essence of the Book, which is the Well-Guarded Tablet. In *Ṣūfī* terms, it refers to the Primal Intelligence (*‘Aql-i Avval*), which is the level of Unity (*Vaḥdat*).

*Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIF p.91, in FNI3 p.138*

*Umm al-Kitāb* represents the Primal Intelligence (*‘Aql-i Avval*) and the Supreme Pen (*Qalam-i ‘Alá*).

*Mir’āt-i ‘Ushshāq, in TAT p.172, in FNI3 p.138*

Rūmī says that the real meaning of *Umm al-Kitāb* is to be found with *Allāh*:

The letters are the vessel:

therein the meaning is contained like water;

But the sea of the meaning is (with God) –

“with Him is the *Umm al-Kitāb*”.

In this world, the bitter sea and the sweet sea are divided –

between them is “a barrier which they do not seek to cross”.

Know that both these flow from one origin.

Pass on from them both, go to their origin!

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:296–98, MJR2 p.19*

See also: **al-‘Aql al-Awwal, al-Qalam** (6.3).

**Unction (of Incorruption) See Oil.**

**Utterance** Something uttered, such as a statement, speech or words; a term sometimes used for the creative emanation of God's Word. In the early Christian *Odes of Solomon*, for instance, the writer speaks of the "Utterance" of the "Word" by means of which the inner realms and powers (the "aeons") came into being and work in harmony with each other. They "acquired speech" and "spoke to one another":

For the subtlety of the Word cannot be told,  
and like (the wonder of) its Utterance,  
so too is its swiftness and its penetration,  
for its course is without end....  
By it, the *aeons* (worlds) spoke to one another,  
and those that were silent acquired speech....  
For the Mouth of the Most High spoke to them,  
and His expression came about by means of it (the Word).

*Odes of Solomon 12:5, 8, 11*

In Hebrew, the terms *ma'amarot* (utterances), *imra* and *imarot* (words) are used for God's ten utterances, according to the creation story in the first chapter of *Genesis* ("And God said, 'Let there be light!' ... 'Let there be a firmament ...'" etc.). Later rabbis and Jewish mystics interpreted these 'utterances' as manifestations of the original, divine creative impulse.

See also: **ma'amarot, Speech.**

**Vāch, Vāk** (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* word, speech, voice; a Vedic term for the divine Creative Word; equivalent to the English use of Word, the Arabic *Kalimah*, the Greek *Logos*, the Latin *Verbum*, and the Avestan *Manthrā*. In Vedic literature, *Vāk* and *Shabd* are also used synonymously. In Hindu culture, *Vāch* is also a name for *Sarasvatī*, the goddess of speech. Hence, a person with the gift of eloquence is considered to have been blessed by the goddess. In Indian mythology, *Vāch* is credited with extensive powers. She pervades heaven and earth, and is the power behind all phenomena. *Vāch* is also said to have discovered *Amṛit* (Nectar of immortality). Such a description is suggestive of a symbolic meaning of *Vāch* as the creative Power. In the *Brāhmaṇas* (sacred texts attached to the *Vedas*), *Vāk* is "second" to the Supreme in the creative process:

This (in the beginning) was only the Lord of the universe.  
His Word (*Vāk*) was with Him; this Word was His second.  
He contemplated; He said:

“I will deliver this Word so that she will produce,  
and bring into being all this world.”

*Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa 20:14.2, VE p.107*

Vāk is also “infinite” and the “support” of all creation:

The Word (*Vāk*) is infinite, immense, beyond all this....

All the gods, the celestial spirits, men and animals,  
live in the Word (*Vāk*).

In the Word (*Vāk*), all the worlds find their support.

*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 2:8.8.4, VE p.107*

In the *Haṃsa Upanishad*, a description is given of ten stages experienced as the soul leaves the body in meditation. The eighth stage is said to be the experience of the *Parāvāk* (supreme Word). The ninth is the opening of the third eye, followed by the soul’s realization of *Brahman*:

In the eighth, the supreme Word (*Parāvāk*) is heard;

In the ninth, ... the pure divine eye opens;

In the tenth, he attains *Parabrahman*,

and the soul (*ātman*) become one with *Brahman*.

*Haṃsa Upanishad 16; cf. TMU pp.163, 299*

The term is also used in Jainism. Jinasenāchārya writes in the *Ādi Purāṇa* that although the divine Speech is unspoken, it is understood by all, and nourishes all:

The divine Word (*Vāk*) emanating from the Lord *Tīrthakara*  
came without the Lord’s wish to speak....

The Word came without any movement of the palate,  
throat or lips, and without showing any teeth....

Though the language was one, yet it assumed different forms,  
depending on the language known to each listener....

Even as canal water, though one, takes different forms  
in the different trees it irrigates.

*Jinasenāchārya, Ādi Purāṇa 1:186, 184, 187, 23:71, APJ1 pp.25, 549*

See also: **Kalimah, Logos, Word.**

**Vahishta Manō** (Av) *Lit.* Highest (*Vahishta*) Mind (*Manō*); Great Mind; First or Primal Intelligence; used by Zarathushtra for the creative Power.

See also: **Vohu Manō**.

**Vahman (Pv)** See **Vohu Manō**.

**Vāñī (S/H)** See **Bāñī**.

**Verbum (L)** *Lit.* Word; the divine Creative Word; the Latin term used in Christian texts for the Greek *Logos*.

See **Logos**.

**Vine, Vine of Life, Vine of souls** See **True Vine**.

**Virginal Spirit, Virgin of the Holy Spirit, Virgin of Light** Gnostic and Hermetic terms used for God, for the Holy Spirit, Wisdom or Mother as the creative Power, and for other powers within the creative hierarchy. *Zostrianos*, for example, speaks of the “Virgin Light”.<sup>1</sup> The *Second Book of Jeu* describes the “baptism of fire” that is given by the “Virgin of the Light”.<sup>2</sup> *On the Origin of the World* speaks of the “Virgin of the Holy Spirit”.<sup>3</sup> In the *Pistis Sophia*, the “Virgin of the Light”<sup>4</sup> is the power responsible for overseeing the rebirth of souls according to their deeds.

In the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the Creator is described by such expressions as the “great, invisible, incomprehensible Virginal Spirit”<sup>5</sup> and the “great, invisible, uncallable, unnameable Virginal Spirit”.<sup>6</sup> And the *Apocryphon of John* describes the supreme Lord as the “invisible, Virginal Spirit who is perfect”<sup>7</sup> from whom the “*Pronoia*”, the “Thinking” or Primal Thought proceeds as the creative Power.

Such terms are also very common in Manichaean literature, where scholars have tended to use the term ‘Maiden’ rather than ‘Virgin’ in their translations, though it comes to the same thing. Like the gnostic texts, these writings characteristically speak of the Holy Spirit as the “glorious Maiden of Light”<sup>8</sup> and so on.

See also: **Mother**.

1. *Zostrianos* 129, *NHS31* pp.218–19.

2. *Second Book of Jeu* 110:46, *BC* pp.148–49.

3. *On the Origin of the World* 105:33, *NHS21* pp.44–45.

4. *Pistis Sophia*, *PS* and *PSGG* – many places, throughout.



5. *Gospel of the Egyptians* 49, *NHS4* p.94.
6. *Gospel of the Egyptians* 55, 65, *NHS4* pp.114, 152.
7. *Apocryphon of John* 4, *NHS33* p.33.
8. *Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXXVII*, *MPB* p.37.

**Vohu Manō** (Av), **Vahman** (Pv), **Mānā** (Md) *Lit.* Great, Pre-eminent, First or Primal (*Vohu*) Mind (*Manō*); Primal Intelligence. Often translated by the expression Good (*Vohu*) Mind (*Manō*), this is one of the many fundamental expressions in the *Gāthās* of Zarathushtra concerning whose meaning scholars disagree. From its usage and from the meaning given to it by the third-century Iranian mystic, Mānī, the term seems to refer to the divine creative power. It is God's First or Primal Mind, His Intelligence or Creative Word which manifests and maintains all creation. Similar expressions are very common in a variety of languages, in Greek, gnostic and Sufi traditions.

In later Zoroastrian thought, *Vohu Manō* retains the position of first-born in the creation of his Father, *Ahurā Mazdā*. Along with the other *Ameshā Spentās*, he is personalized and given the status of an archangel with various functions and duties. He is the guardian of wisdom and the protection given to creation against the attack of the evil Spirit. He is the intermediary through whom the devout may aspire to reach *Ahurā Mazdā*. Metaphysically speaking, he is also the one who welcomes the souls of the righteous into paradise, rising from his golden throne to receive the newcomers with kindness and gracious words.

In more philosophical terms, *Vohu Manō* is perceived as the vital force within all living creatures on the 'good' side of creation (according to Zoroastrian dualism). He is regarded as being present everywhere, and all the good thoughts, good deeds and good words of human beings are considered to be his doing. In Zoroastrian tradition, *Vohu Manō* is also credited with being the guardian of the animal kingdom. All these may be seen as a personalization of aspects of the divine creative power.

In his *Gāthās*, Zarathushtra places great emphasis on *Vohu Manō*. It is, he says, the means by which the soul may reach God:

Gladly would I, *Mazdā Ahurā*, reach up to You,  
through *Vohu Manō*.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 28:2; cf. DSZ p.94*

In another verse, he uses imagery familiar to far later Jewish, Christian, Sufi and Indian mystics – that of the lover and the Beloved:

I know, O *Mazdā*, the reason why I am indeed so helpless, ...  
but, O *Ahurā*, I appeal to You as lover to Beloved:

Teach me how I may be one with You in perfect Bliss;  
 Through Your divine Truth (*Ashā*),  
 make me feel the might of Your Primal Mind (*Vohu Manō*).

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 46:2; cf. DSZ p.575*

In the Zoroastrian *Dēnkart*, *Vohu Manō* is described as “visiting” the “life principle” or soul:

Every opening of the (inner) eye  
 (comes to pass) by the complete visiting of *Vohu Manō*  
 to the life principle.

*Dēnkart, CTPD p.281; cf. GVM p.46*

In Middle Eastern mysticism, the soul was commonly said to be in search of its lost garment or robe of light and glory which it discarded when it left its heavenly home with God. In Zoroastrianism, the soul’s guide and the bestower of its immortal garment was understood to be *Vohu Manō*. Swedish scholar Geo Widengren writes:

It is related in a passage in *Dātastān-i Dēnīk* (a Zoroastrian text) that the soul of the righteous man, accompanied by the Good Spirit (*Vohu Manō*) who is the ‘companion of the soul’ after death, ascends to the heavenly abodes and to the garment.... And having introduced the soul to *Ahurā Mazdā*, *Vohu Manō* shows it its throne and reward.

*Geo Widengren, The Great Vohu Manah, GVM pp.49–50*

That is, it is *Vohu Manō*, the creative Power, who takes the soul to God, and gives it its garment of light. In the same Zoroastrian book, *Vohu Manō* is likened to a seamless “garment”:

It is necessary that it is the healthy, white, pure, single (garment), made in one piece, just as *Vohu Manō* is in this manner the first creature (created power). Consequently, it is from him (*Vohu Manō*) that ... the innermost and concealed garment has its appellation.

*Dātastān-i Dēnīk 40:2; cf. GVM p.50*

Though an Avestan term, *Manō* became incorporated into later Persian and Mesopotamian languages, where it is commonly translated as ‘mind’, but it is more in keeping with what mystics mean in modern times by ‘soul’. *Manō*, on its own, was also used for the Mind of God, meaning His creative Thought or Power.

Mandaean texts from southern Mesopotamia, stemming from earliest Christian times, use the term *Mānā* or First *Mānā*, incorporating the Persian

term into their own Aramaic-like language. In places, *Mānā* seems to be the divine Source itself. It is the First Power, the First Cause, the First Thought or creative Intelligence, the Primal Essence or Essence of Being that lies behind everything:

I worship, laud and praise that great, secret, First *Mānā*  
 who abode for nine hundred and ninety-nine myriads of years  
 alone in His own abode – for no companion came to Him.  
 (None existed) save that great, secret, First *Mānā*.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 36, CPM pp.36–37*

In other instances, the First *Mānā* is the Emanation or Messenger of God, known to the Mandaeans – among other names – as the “Great First Life”:

Let there be light, let there be light!  
 Let there be the light of the Great First Life!  
 There shone forth wisdom, vigilance and praise  
 of the First *Mānā* which came from its place....

Before the *Mānā* there is light, behind the *Mānā* glory,  
 and at either side of the *Mānā*,  
 radiance, brilliance and purity.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 5, CPM p.4*

This Messenger is one of love, bringing *Nāšīrūtha* (mystic Truth) to human beings:

As long as water flows will the lovingkindness  
 of the mystic *Mānā* flow on.  
 He will enlighten your mind with *Nāšīrūtha*.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 376, CPM p.275*

And likewise:

The great *Mānā* was dazzlingly bright in His glory.  
 So too shall these living, shining,  
 steadfast and vigorous souls shine in splendour  
 in the great place of Light and the everlasting abode.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 56, CPM p.49*

In Zarathushtra’s Avestan language the individual soul, as a spark of the divine, was also known as *manō*, synonymous with the Avestan *urvan*, meaning soul. The relationship between *manō* and *Manō* or *Vohu Manō* is the same as that which exists between *ātman* (individual self or soul) and

*Brahman* (supreme Self or Reality) in the *Upanishads*. Likewise, in the Mandaean texts, the individual soul is also called a *mānā*:

I am a *mānā* of the Great Life.  
 A *mānā* am I of the Mighty Life,  
 a *mānā* am I of the Great Life,  
 a *mānā* that emanated from *Mānā*.  
*Mandaean Prayer Book 213; cf. CPM p.182*

Similarly, addressing the congregation of souls (*mānās*):

Bestir yourselves! Put on your robes!  
 Put on your living wreaths, gird on your girdles  
 in which nothing is awry or blemished.  
 Above your head there will be fruit,  
 and there, at your time and season,  
 your *mānās* will be set up in the Light.  
 Your *mānās* in the Light will be set up.  
 So rise up, behold the place of Light!

*Mandaean Prayer Book 67, CPM p.54*

Here again is the metaphor of the soul's innate garment or robe of light. In Mandaean and Syriac languages, the term for 'garment' is also *mānā*, and since there were many people in the ancient Middle East who were familiar with both Syriac and Persian languages, it is not surprising to find the *mānā* used in wordplays where it means both the creative Power and the garment of the soul, as in a Mandaean text:

The Great Life has stretched forth  
 His Right Hand to you!  
 Put away passion from your thought!  
 Your thought shall be filled with ours,  
 and your garment (*mānā*) and our Garment (*Mānā*)  
 shall become one.

*Dīwān Malkuta 'Laita, DML 691ff., SA p.55*

"His Right Hand", the 'Thought' of God and His divine "Garment" all refer to the creative Power. Thus, in a cross-lingual play on words, the last line has a second meaning of "your soul (*mānā*) and our Soul (*Mānā*) shall become one". It means that the soul becomes one with the divine creative power.

The same wordplay is found in the gnostic story, the *Robe of Glory*. This poem contains a number of Persian words indicating that the writer was familiar with Persian, as many of his readers would have been. According

to the allegorical story, when the soul ascends to the Father and receives its robe or garment, it exclaims in wonder, “The garment seemed to me like a mirror of myself”<sup>1</sup> – an exclamation which also means, “The soul seemed to me like a mirror of myself.” It means that the soul is the real self, and that this is what the “garment” symbolizes.

The third-century Iranian mystic, Mānī, teaching nearly two thousand years after Zarathushtra, used the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) corruption of *Vohu Manō*, *Vahman*, often equated in Manichaean writings with the Greek term, *Nous*, meaning Mind or Intelligence. Both of them refer to the Lord’s creative Intelligence or Power which creates, sustains and orders the cosmos and dwells within the soul. As Swedish scholar Geo Widengren writes:

The great *Vahman* is at the same time a universal Power and a faculty working inside the human organism. If this holds true, the great *Vahman* would be the higher principle in man, be it called ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’, or the like. The human spirit is thus part and parcel of the cosmic principle.

But this cosmic Power, which at the same time is planted in the hearts of men, is in the Manichaean system one of the most important Saviours....

That *Ahurā Mazdā* is the Father of *Vohu Manō* is mentioned in many other passages of Zoroastrian literature, both in Avestan and in Pahlavi writings.

*Geo Widengren, The Great Vohu Manah, GVM pp.17, 45*

According to the particular background of his varied audiences, Mānī taught from the teachings of Buddha, Jesus or Zarathushtra. *Vahman* appears frequently in Manichaean literature, especially in Middle Persian dialects. Mānī, for instance, is described in one text as the “Messenger” and “Leader” through whom “*Vahman*” will lead the soul to “eternal life”:

You rose and shone like the Sun,  
blessed Image, Leader of Truth,  
who are like the God *Zurvan* in appearance.  
On this day of joy our love shines from our hearts to you.  
Come in good health!  
May the Messengers give you peace!  
May this Leader who has come to a great day of joy  
be blessed (in view of) a new good omen.  
May the gods give you peace,  
may the angels protect you  
and may *Vahman* lead you anew to eternal life.

*Manichaean Hymns, MBB 18ff.; cf. GSR p.138:1.VIII.1–2*

Likewise, a devotional psalm speaks of initiation into the *Vahman*:

We worship the great *Vahman*,  
whom you have planted in the hearts of the devoted.

*Manichaean Hymns, MBB 18ff.; cf. GSR p.137:1.VII.1*

And those who give spiritual discourses are remembered in Manichaean prayers as those who receive their strength from “*Vahman*, the Redeemer”:

May the preachers of the secret mysteries  
be given new power by *Vahman*, the Redeemer.

*Manichaean Hymns, RMP cn, GSR p.93:2.7*

See also: **Ameshā Spentās, al-‘Aql al-Awwal, Mind, Nous, Thought.**

1. *Robe of Glory* 76, *Acts of Thomas* IX; cf. AAA p.243, ANT p.414, HS pp.24–25.

**Voice, Voice from heaven, Voice of a great thunder, Voice of God, Voice of harpers, Voice of Life, Voice of Living Waters, Voice of many waters, Voice of Truth** The term ‘Voice’ and its many variants have been commonly used in many languages for the Word of God. Just as a word is uttered and can be heard, so too can a voice. Both the Word and the Voice allude to the audibility of the inner creative Power. The use of the term in the Middle East can be traced from early biblical, to Christian, gnostic, Manichaean and far later Sufi times. Given the prevalence of metaphor and allegory in Middle Eastern literature, from ancient times, biblical stories where God speaks were – in their original forms – almost certainly meant metaphorically. In *Genesis*, before they are cast out, Adam and Eve hear the “Voice of God” in the garden of Eden (the higher creation).<sup>1</sup> Again, in an evocative passage from the story of Elijah, God manifests as a “still small Voice”,<sup>2</sup> interpreted in the *Zohar* as “the very innermost Point, which is the Source of all illumination”.<sup>3</sup>

In *Deuteronomy*, Moses tells the errant children of Israel that when the suffering of being in the creation becomes too much to bear, “At the end of days, you will return to *Yahweh* your God.” The means of this return, he says, will be to “listen to His Voice”:

But you will seek *Yahweh* your God ..., and if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul, you shall find Him. In your distress, all that I have said will overtake you, but, at the end of days, you will return to *Yahweh* your God, and listen to His Voice. For

*Yahweh* your God is a merciful God, and will not desert or destroy you or forget the covenant He made on oath with your fathers.

*Deuteronomy 4:29–31, JB*

Writing allegorically in the style of a revelation, the prophet Ezekiel also speaks of the sound of “His Voice”, seen and heard when he passes through the inner gateway into the higher realms – the “gate that looketh toward the east”, the horizon from which the light first appears:

Afterward he (an angelic guide) brought me to the gate,  
 even the gate that looketh toward the east;  
 And, behold the glory of the God of Israel  
 came from the way of the east;  
 And His Voice was like the sound of many waters,  
 and the earth (the creation) did shine with His glory.

*Ezekiel 43:1–2, JPS*

This metaphor of the “Voice” also occurs in the *Psalms* where its meaning could easily encompass that of the creative Power though the context is often ambiguous. The hundred-and-third psalm, for instance, speaks of the “angels ... that do His commandments, hearkening unto the Voice of His Word”.<sup>4</sup> In the twenty-ninth psalm, the writer describes the unlimited power of the divine “Voice” by likening it to the most awesome of natural forces:

The Voice of *Yahweh* sharpens lightning shafts!  
 The Voice of *Yahweh* sets the wilderness shaking.  
*Yahweh* shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.  
 The Voice of *Yahweh* sets the terebinths shuddering,  
 stripping the forests bare.

The God of glory thunders.  
 In his palace everything cries, “Glory!” ...  
*Yahweh* sits enthroned as a king for ever;  
*Yahweh* gives strength to his people;  
*Yahweh* blesses his people with peace.

*Psalms 29:7–11, JB*

In *Proverbs*, the creative Power is known as Wisdom, who is said to “call” with her “voice”. This Call is both the Word, heard within, as well as the inner attraction of the soul for God. Here, there is no doubt as to the meaning:

Wisdom calls aloud in the streets,  
 she raises her voice in the public squares;

She calls out at the street corners,  
 she delivers her message at the city gates:  
 “You ignorant people, how much longer  
 will you cling to your ignorance?”

*Proverbs 1:20–22, JB*

The mystic literature of the Middle East is characterized by metaphor and double meaning. This is never more apparent than in the biblical *Song of Songs*, a suite of poems which makes a considerable number of references to the Beloved’s “voice” or to the lover’s ‘hearing’ of the Beloved. The second poem, for instance, begins with the lover saying:

I hear my Beloved;  
 See how he comes  
     leaping on the mountains  
     bounding over the hills....  
 He looks in at the window,  
     he peers through the lattice.  
 my Beloved lifts up his voice.

*Song of Songs 2:8–10, JB*

The mystic Beloved comes swiftly and without hindrance through the “mountains” and “hills”, the inner regions of creation. He comes to the house of the lover, the soul in the human form – and calls with his call of the divine Music – “his voice”.

In the story, the Beloved comes to her, and at the sound of his voice and the sweetness of his invitation, her longing is stirred and her desire to see his “face”, his radiant, spiritual form, is intensified. So she says:

Show me your face,  
     let me hear your voice;  
 For your voice is sweet  
     and your face is beautiful.

*Song of Songs 2:14, JB*

The *Song of Songs* contains a number of other references to the voice, sound or speech of the Beloved. Finally, a note penned by one of the *Song*’s many scribes expresses the same longing to hear the “Voice” of the Beloved:

You who dwell in the gardens,  
     the companions listen for your Voice;  
 Deign to let me hear it.

*Song of Songs 8:13, JB*



Understood in this way, the Beloved is the mystic teacher, the Master, a human personification of the divine Voice. These passages from the *Song of Songs* are thus allusions not only to the physical voice of the Beloved, but also to the divine Music, the Creation Song, the Sound Current, the Voice, the Cry, the Call, the Word. For it is the drawing power of this sweet, magnetic and blissful current of God that pulls souls back to Him, and is the real focus of the soul's love.

In many Old Testament instances, the metaphorical usage leaves some margin of doubt as to the interpretation. However, the term was also used extensively in early Christian times, where there is little or no doubt that it refers to the creative Word. According to the writer of John's gospel, for instance, Jesus used the metaphor extensively, as in his parable of the shepherd:

He that entereth in by the door  
is the shepherd of the sheep.  
To him the porter (doorkeeper) openeth,  
and the sheep hear his Voice:  
And he calleth his own sheep by name,  
and leadeth them out.  
And when he putteth (leadeth) forth his own sheep,  
he goeth before them,  
and the sheep follow him: for they know his Voice.

*John 10:2-4, KJV*

And again:

My sheep hear my Voice, and I know them,  
and they follow me:  
And I give unto them eternal life,  
and they shall never perish,  
neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

*John 10:27-28, KJV*

The shepherd is the Master who comes to collect his allotted sheep and "give unto them eternal life". They are intended for that particular Master, and they recognize his "Voice", as sheep know the voice of their own shepherd. The "Voice" here refers to the divine Music as well as to the teachings of their own Master. In all respects, the sheep respond to the Master – both outwardly, when they come into contact with him, and inwardly when they hear the sound of the Voice or Word, which is the real or spiritual form of the Master. This is what Jesus means when he says:

To this end was I born,  
and for this cause came I into the world:

That I should bear witness unto the Truth.  
Every one that is of the Truth heareth my Voice.

*John 18:37, KJV*

This passage only makes sense from a mystic point of view: those who are inwardly baptized or initiated into the mystic truth of the Word will hear its Voice. If it were taken to mean that only those who physically heard Jesus speak would find the Truth, then that would not support later Christian belief. The passage is a good example of the *double entendre* which is so characteristic of John's gospel. As many others have remarked, John's gospel does not record the actual words of Jesus, but only his teachings, put into Jesus' mouth by the unknown author. John's gospel, throughout, is a long dissertation on the theme with which it opens – the *Logos*. Just as Wisdom 'speaks' in *Proverbs* and other biblical books, so too is it the Creative Word, the *Logos*, which is speaking here.

Among the writings of the early Christian period, there are many references to the divine Voice, where it is explicitly equated with the Word of God. In the *Acts of Peter*, it is said to be something quite different from the physically uttered word – “this word which comes forth by means of art whose nature is material”. Moreover, this Voice “is perceived in silence”, it is “not heard openly”, phrases which are reminiscent of Indian and Sufi mystics who speak of this same Power as the unstruck Music, the silent Music, the unwritten Law, the unspoken Language and by many similar names. The Voice of God is only heard when the mind becomes still and silent, engendering further peace and stillness in the mind and soul. Again, it is emphasized that the soul gives thanks to the Word, “not with these lips ... nor with this (physical) tongue by which truth and falsehood issue forth”, but by inwardly listening to “that Voice”:

Whereas you have made known  
and revealed these things to me, O Word,  
called now by me the Tree of Life –  
I thank you, not with these lips, ...  
nor with this tongue  
by which truth and falsehood issue forth;  
Nor with this word which comes forth  
by means of art whose nature is material.

But with that Voice do I thank you, O King,  
which is perceived in silence,  
which is not heard openly,  
which proceeds not from organs of the body,  
which goes not into ears of flesh,

which is not heard of corruptible substance,  
 which exists not in the world,  
 neither is sent forth upon earth, nor written in books,  
 nor is owned by one and not by another:

But with this, O Jesu Christ, do I thank you,  
 with the silence of a Voice,  
 wherewith the spirit that is in me loves you,  
 speaks to you, sees you, and beseeches you.  
 You are perceived by the spirit only.

*Acts of Peter XXXIX; cf. ANT p.335*

This passage leaves no doubt that neither the Voice nor the Word are of this world. In the *Acts of Thomas*, the Voice is once again explicitly stated not to belong “to the nature of this bodily organ”; that the Voice is in no way similar to a physical voice. In the following excerpt, a young man is talking to the apostle Thomas:

I beseech you, O man of God,  
 cause me to behold him (Jesus) again,  
 and to see him that is now hidden from me,  
 that I may hear his Voice  
 whereof I am not able to express the wonder,  
 for it belongs not to the nature of this bodily organ.

*Acts of Thomas 34; cf. ANT p.381*

The Voice is mentioned frequently in the *Acts of Thomas*, where it is often equated with both Jesus and the Word, as when Judas Thomas addresses Jesus as:

Jesu Christ, Son of compassion and perfect Saviour,  
 Christ, Son of the Living God,  
 the undaunted Power that has overthrown the Enemy,  
 and the Voice that was heard of the rulers,  
 and made all their powers to quake.

*Acts of Thomas 8, 10; cf. ANT p.369*

Here, the rulers or *archons* are the lords or administrators of the inner realms. They “hear” this Voice, because it is from it that their powers are derived. And for this reason, they “quake” – they know there is a power higher than themselves. Similarly, Jesus is addressed as the Word or “Voice” itself:

Jesu most high, Voice arising from perfect mercy,  
 Saviour of all, the Right Hand of the Light,  
 overthrowing the Evil One.

*Acts of Thomas 48, ANT p.387*

In this passage, the author makes his point by means of contrast. “Perfect mercy”, the characteristic of the Father, is contrasted with the negativity of the “Evil One”, Satan. The “Voice” is an emanation of this “perfect mercy”, and the Saviour is the “Right Hand of the Light”, the active Power of God through which His work is accomplished, even in the regions of the left hand, of Satan.

In another prayer of Judas Thomas, Jesus is described as calling with his “Voice” to the “dead” – to the souls lost in the darkness of this world – so that they “became alive”, rising up through the spiritual regions towards the realm of Life:

You hurled the Evil One from his power,  
 and called with your Voice to the dead,  
 and they became alive.

*Acts of Thomas I; cf. AAA pp.154*

There are many examples in ancient religious and mystical literature, biblical and otherwise, where God speaks ‘with a voice like thunder’ or with ‘a voice from a cloud’, and so on. Often, these are part of some anecdote, the hidden meaning of which – if any – may be hard to determine. In other instances, the sense is more clearly allegorical. There are many other cases, too, where the writer has heard or read about the Voice of God and, not knowing what it really is, has made it into a voice that speaks human words. Then, with the lapse of time and the hand of later editors and translators, it becomes difficult to be certain what was meant by the original text.

The *Gospel of Peter*, for instance, tells a version of the resurrection story in which the two Roman soldiers guarding the sepulchre where Jesus was laid become witnesses to the resurrection events, more or less as recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. But associated with this resurrection are a “Sound in the heaven” and “a Voice out of the heavens”:

Now in the night ... as the soldiers were keeping guard two by two in every watch, there came a great Sound in the heaven, and they saw the heavens opened and two men descend thence, shining with a great light, and drawing near unto the sepulchre. And that stone which had been set on the door rolled away of itself, and went back to the side, and the sepulchre was opened, and both of the young men entered in.

When therefore those soldiers saw that, they awoke the centurion and the elders (for they also were there keeping watch); and while they were yet telling them the things which they had seen, they saw again three men come out of the sepulchre, and two of them supporting the other and a cross following after them.

And of the two, they saw that their heads reached up to heaven, but of him that was led by them, that it overpassed the heavens. And they heard a Voice out of the heavens saying: "Have you preached unto them that sleep?" And an answer was heard from the cross, saying: "Yes."

*Gospel of Peter IX:35–36, X:38–42; cf. ANT pp.92–93*

The tale appears to be recounted as a straight miracle story, without hint of it being intended as an allegory. Even so, the writer has incorporated aspects of the mystical tradition. Jesus' resurrection is accompanied in the story by the "Sound in the heaven", and many mystics have said that the resurrection or ascension of the soul from the body is indeed accompanied by a heavenly Sound.

Subsequently, a "Voice out of the heavens" is heard asking, "Have you preached unto them that sleep" – in the physical universe? And the "cross" – often found as a symbol for the Tree of Life – replies, "Yes", both the "Voice" and the "Tree" being terms for the same divine creative Power.

Furthermore, the beings of light who are described as accompanying Jesus out of the sepulchre have "heads" that "reached up to heaven" – that is, their inner height was of the heavens, the inner realms, while the head of "him that was led by them (*i.e.* Jesus) ... overpassed the heavens". The only thing other than God that is higher than the heavens of creation is the divine Word, and it is clearly this meaning that the writer intends to convey.

It is unclear, therefore, whether the writer intended the admixture of metaphor and miracle. Indeed, there are many other places in both the apocryphal and canonical literature where the meaning of the writer or compiler is uncertain, though that of the original tradition or earlier text seems clear enough. In the *Book of Revelation*, for example, "the Spirit" speaks in a letter addressed to the church in Laodicea, supposedly dictated to the writer by an angel:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock:  
if any man hear my Voice and open the door,  
I will come in to him,  
and will sup with him, and he with me."

*Book of Revelation 3:20, KJV*

The Spirit, the Master, waits at the inner door, the single eye. Echoing the words of John's gospel, he knocks and calls with his "Voice", and if any soul hears, he goes within, partaking of the spiritual nourishment of the Word. The writer then continues:

After this I looked,  
 and, behold, a door was opened in heaven:  
 And the first Voice which I heard  
 was as it were of a trumpet talking with me,  
 which said, "Come up hither,  
 and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."  
 And immediately I was in the Spirit.

*Book of Revelation 4:1–2, KJV*

The inner door is opened to the soul, and the "Voice ... as it were of a trumpet" beckons, calls or draws the soul "up hither". "And immediately I was in the Spirit" – the soul is taken up into the spiritual realms. Later, in another vision or inner experience, the same writer claims:

And I heard a Voice from heaven,  
 as the Voice of many waters,  
 and as the Voice of a great thunder:  
 And I heard the Voice of harpers,  
 harping with their harps.

*Book of Revelation 14:2, KJV*

Gnostic writings of early Christian times are equally explicit as to the nature of this Voice. In the *Dialogue of the Saviour* Jesus explains that it is by the power of this Voice that souls are taken up to the Light of God:

Then said he to his disciples,  
 "Have I not told you that by a visible Voice  
 and a flash of lightning  
 will the good be taken up to the Light."

*Dialogue of the Saviour 136:38, NHS26 p.73*

The author of *Thunder: Perfect Mind*, writing in the name of the Voice, equates it with the Word, the Name, Wisdom, the Thought, Knowledge, the Sound and the "Speech which cannot be grasped" – all terms for the creative Power:

I am the Silence that is incomprehensible,  
 and the Thought (*Epinoia*) whose remembrance is frequent.

I am the Voice whose sound is manifold,  
 and the Word (*Logos*) whose appearance is multiple.  
 I am the utterance of my Name....  
 I am the Wisdom of the Greeks,  
 and the Knowledge of the barbarians....

I am the hearing which can be attained by everyone,  
 and the Speech which cannot be grasped.  
 I am a mute who does not speak,  
 and great is my multitude of words (emanations)....

I am the Name of the Sound,  
 and the Sound of the Name....  
 For I am the One who alone exists,  
 and I have no one who will judge me.

*Thunder: Perfect Mind 14, 16, 19–21;  
 cf. NHS11 pp.236–37, 240–41, 248–49, 252–53*

The *Thought of Norea* equates the “Voice of Truth” with the Thought or “*Ennoia* of the Light”, the *Logos* and the *Nous*, the creative Power as the primal, divine Intelligence:

Father of All, *Ennoia* (Thought) of the Light,  
*Nous* dwelling in the Heights above the regions below,  
 Light dwelling in the Heights,  
 Voice of Truth, upright *Nous*, untouchable *Logos*,  
 and ineffable Voice, incomprehensible Father!

*Thought of Norea 27, NHS15 pp.94–95*

The author of the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, writing in the name of both God and His creative Power, speaks of the Voice in similar terms, adding that it is the Power which came down into this world as the Son, to give *gnosis* and salvation:

I am the Invisible One within the All (the creation)....  
 I am immeasurable, ineffable, yet whenever I wish,  
 I shall reveal myself of my own accord.  
 I am the head of the All;  
 I exist before the All, and I am the All,  
 since I exist in everyone.

I am a Voice speaking softly;  
 I exist from the first.

I dwell within the Silence....  
And it is the hidden Voice that dwells within me,  
    within the incomprehensible, immeasurable Thought,  
    within the immeasurable Silence.

I descended to the midst of the underworld (this world),  
    and I shone down upon the darkness.  
It is I who poured forth the water;  
It is I who am hidden within Radiant Waters.  
I am the One who gradually  
    put forth (emanated) the All by my Thought.  
It is I who am laden with the Voice.  
It is through me that *gnosis* comes forth....  
I am perception (enlightenment) and knowledge,  
    uttering a Voice by means of Thought.

I am the real Voice.  
I cry out in everyone,  
    and they recognize it (the Voice),  
    since a seed (of me) dwells in (each of) them.  
I am the Thought of the Father,  
    and through me proceeded the Voice,  
    that is, the knowledge of everlasting things....

I revealed myself ... among all those who recognize me.  
For it is I who am joined (one) with everyone  
    by virtue of the hidden Thought and an exalted Voice,  
    even a Voice from the invisible Thought.

And it is immeasurable,  
    since it dwells in the immeasurable One....  
It is a Light dwelling in Light....

It is we, [dwelling apart in] the visible world,  
    who are saved by the hidden Wisdom,  
    by means of the ineffable, immeasurable Voice.  
And that which is hidden within us (the soul)  
    pays the tributes of his fruit to the Water of Life.

Then the Son who is perfect in every respect –  
    that is, the Word (*Logos*) who originated through that Voice,  
    who proceeded from the Height,  
    who has within him the Name; who is a Light –



He (the Son) revealed the everlasting things  
and all the unknowns were known.

*Trimorphic Protennoia* 35:24,28–34, 36:1–10,  
12–19,22–28,32–36, 37:1–8, *NHS28* pp.402–7

And again:

I am the Word (*Logos*) who dwells in the ineffable Voice.  
I dwell in undefiled Light....  
It (the Word) is a hidden Light,  
bearing a Fruit of Life,  
pouring forth a Living Water  
from the invisible, unpolluted, immeasurable Spring,  
that is the unreproducible Voice.

*Trimorphic Protennoia* 46:5–6, 16–20, *NHS28* pp.424–25

Likewise, the *Untitled Text* of the *Bruce Codex* speaks of the divine “Voice” which permeates all things, and the “First Sound” by which the creation knows of God:

He is the First Father of the All (the creation).  
He is the First Eternity....  
He is the First Source.  
He it is whose Voice has penetrated everywhere.  
He is the First Sound  
whereby the All perceived and understood.

*Untitled Text* 226:1; cf. *BC* pp.214–15, *FFF* pp.547

Similar use of the metaphor is found among the Manichaean literature. In one of the Parthian hymns, there is a poem or song in which the soul describes her plight in this world asking, rhetorically, who will release her from such slavery and bondage. At this juncture:

While I thus wept, and shed tears upon the ground,  
I heard the Voice of the beneficent King.

*Manichaean Hymns, Huwīdagmān* VI:1, *MHCP* pp.94–95

As in other instances, the “Voice” encompasses the spiritual call of the Word within, the sweetness and enchantment of its music, and the kindly, loving and wise words of a Saviour. The same double meaning is contained in a number of verses:

Every voice I have heard,  
but no other Voice pleased me save yours.

*Manichaean Psalm Book*; cf. *MPB* p.154

And:

I have lived since I heard your sweet Voice ...  
 O glorious one;  
 For I have seen them of the dear Image.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXXXIII; cf. MPB p.104*

“I have lived since I heard your sweet Voice,” says the soul, for the true, mystic Voice is the source of life. The “dear Image” is reference to the inner, spiritual form of the Saviour.

Mandaean writings are also replete with explicit references to the Voice, the Word and the Command of God. In one passage, the “vines” are the souls and the branches of creation that come into existence by means of the divine “Voice” and “Word”:

By means of His Voice and His Word,  
 vines grew and came into being.

*Mandaean Prayer Book I; cf. CPM p.1*

Another poem indicates that this “Voice” emanates from *Abathur* (God):

Praised be that Voice, Strength, Word and Command  
 which come from the house of *Abathur*.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 25, CPM pp.21–22*

In another passage, the “Voice of Living Waters” proclaims its pre-existence over the creation:

“Before the Wellsprings were transmuted,  
 before the Awakening without,  
 before you were in existence,  
 I was in the world:  
 The Voice of Living Waters,  
 waters which transmute the turbid waters;  
 They become clear and shining;  
 They gush forth, casting out impurities.”

Wherefore should the First Life desire sons from the dregs?  
 Voices cry aloud proclamations,  
 planning schemes, all of them talk!  
 But one Voice comes and teaches about this and that.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 121; cf. CPM p.117*

The poet asks why God, the “First Life”, should wish to redeem souls from the pits of creation, the physical realm of darkness and ignorance of God. It is a good question, relating to the intellectually unanswerable question, “Why did God create such a creation?” In this world, he says, teachings, paths, philosophies and religions abound – “all of them talk!” But when the “one Voice” comes – the Word made flesh, the Saviour – he teaches about the essence of all things, for he is all-wise. Only through mystic communion with this “one Voice” can the solution to all questions be truly found. The same theme is continued in another poem:

Voices have been voiced, opinions have been given,  
 all kinds of pronouncements;  
 Yet there comes one Voice, who teaches all voices,  
 There comes one Saying, who teaches all sayings.  
 There comes one Being, who explains them one by one.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 153; cf. CPM p.133*

And again:

For this mystery, this explanation,  
 is a Voice which explains voices,  
 a Word which interprets all words:  
 It is a Good Man who teaches,  
 addressing each individually.

*Thousand and Twelve Questions I:231; cf. TTQ p.168*

The Voice or Word answers all the questions and answers all the conundrums of life. And it is to be contacted through its personification, a “Good Man”, a Saviour, who takes individual responsibility for the spiritual progress, liberation and eventual God-realization of each soul.

The Mandaean writings contain many such references to the coming of the Voice or Word as a Saviour. Often, the Saviour is given the name of *Mandā-d-Hiia*, meaning ‘Knowledge of Life’:

Who saw *Mandā-d-Hiia*  
 when he went and came to the world?  
 He went thence (from God) and came to the world....  
 He taught, and lovely was his Voice!

*Mandaean Prayer Book 119, CPM p.115*

Hearing this “Voice”, the disciple says that he has been “signed with the Sign of Life”, he has been initiated with the mystic Name of God, synonymous with the “Voice of Life” and the “Perfume of Life”:

I ... am signed with the Sign of Life,  
 and the Name of Life and the Name of *Mandā-d-Hiia*  
 were pronounced on me.  
 My ears have heard the Voice of Life.  
 My nostrils have breathed the Perfume of Life.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 104, CPM p.103*

As a consequence, the disciple hears the “Voice of Life” and breathes its “Perfume” – both being allusions to contact with the divine Music inside. In another passage, the poet points out the advantages of hearing this Voice. He will be “built up” and made strong within himself:

He who hears the Voice of Life  
 will be edified, will be built up.  
 Built up and armed,  
 his strength will be doubled.

Moreover, those who listen to the Speech of Life  
 will be greatly increased (within),  
 will be enriched and will not lack.

Into the communion that is great will he be knit,  
 he will enter the communion that is great,  
 so that he will be united therewith and will arise,  
 and will behold the place of light.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 88; cf. CPM p.92*

Such an individual will be merged in the “communion that is great” – the mystic communion of the soul with the Saviour, the Voice and ultimately with God – the “place of light” – all these being one.

Later mystics from the central stream of Christianity have also spoken of the divine Sound of the Word that can be experienced within the soul. John of the Cross calls it the sonorous Sound, the silent Music, the divine Whisper, the sounding Rivers and the sounding Solitude. He also describes it as the spiritual Sound, the spiritual Voice or simply the Voice. Writing metaphorically, he says:

That which is born in the soul from that breathing of the air (of the spiritual garden) is the sweet Voice of the Beloved (the Word) speaking to her.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XXXIX:8, CWJC2 p.377*

As a result of hearing this “sweet Voice”, he continues:

(The soul) feels the new spring in liberty, enlargement and joy of spirit, wherein she hears the sweet voice of the Spouse (Beloved), ... by the which Voice, refreshing and renewing the substance of her soul, so that it is now well prepared for the journey to life eternal....

This Voice of the Spouse, who speaks to the bride (the soul) in the inmost part of the soul, she perceives to be the end of her ills, and the beginning of her blessings.

*John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle XXXIX:8–9, CWJC2 p.377*

Above all else, this creative Power is audible within. Hearing the Word or the Voice of God is no metaphor, but a description of a sublime reality. Though often interpreted as the hearing or intellectual understanding of religious teachings, it is actually something far higher. And it is so central to the teachings of the highest mystics and true men of God that it always – without exception – occupies a prominent place in their teachings.

Listening to the unearthly strains of the Voice of God is the primary spiritual exercise taught by such mystics. But this divine Sound, like the divine light which is a part of it, is not immediately accessible to most human beings. In fact, until the soul and mind have been able to withdraw to the single eye, only faint echoes of the divine Music can be heard even by those who seek it.

It can be comprehended, therefore, why this divine Power has been spoken of so much by mystics of all ages and cultures; why it has been given so many names; and why – since only mystics and their disciples really understand what is being described – this Word or Voice has been so little understood by the world at large.

See also: **Āvāz, Bānī, Kol, Speech, Word.**

1. *Genesis* 3:8–10.
2. *1 Kings* 19:12, *JCL*.
3. *Zohar* 1:209a, *ZSS2* p.291, *JCL*.
4. *Psalms* 103:20, *KJV*.

**Voice of the Silence** A term coined by H.P. Blavatsky (1831–1891), founder member of the Theosophical Society, for the inner Sound:

Before the soul can comprehend and remember, she must unto the Silent Speaker be united, just as the form to which the clay is modelled is first united with the potter's mud. For then the soul will hear, and will remember. And then, to the inner ear, will speak – the Voice of the Silence.

*H.P. Blavatsky, The Voice of the Silence, VSB pp.2–3*

**Water(s), Water of emancipation** Middle Eastern mystics especially have used a variety of metaphors involving water when speaking of the divine creative power. Just as water brings life to arid areas, so do the spiritual Waters bring life into creation and to souls lost in the material realm. Although more commonly found in such expressions as Living Water and Water of Life, the divine Power is also referred to simply as Water or Waters. In one of the Manichaean psalms, for instance, the Word itself is identified as “holy, imperishable Water”,<sup>1</sup> while in another, in a prayer addressed to Jesus, a psalmist writes:

Save me now, I beseech you, my Lord.  
I call unto you, O victor eternal:  
    hear my cry, O compassionate One ...  
Wash me in your holy Waters,  
    and make me spotless, even as I (really) am.

Lo, the time has drawn near:  
    may I return to my habitations (my true home).  
You are the way, you are the Door of life eternal,  
    in truth the Son of God, my Saviour.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCL; cf. MPB p.59*

And again:

Purify me, my Bridegroom, O Saviour,  
    with your Waters that are full of grace.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXIII; cf. MPB p.79*

Referring to the Saviour as the divine Physician, a Mandaean passage identifies the Physician’s “medicine” as this same spiritual “Water”:

O Physician, whose medicine is Water,  
    come, be a Physician to your devotees!

*Mandaean Prayer Book 71; cf. CPM p.59, MEM p.162*

Among some far earlier texts from ancient Mesopotamia, it is clear that the idea of healing and liberating waters has existed for a long time, as in an incantation against the power of a sorceress:

May the pure flood break her heart,  
    may the pure Waters loosen her sorcery!

*Assyrian Text, ABM III:86–87, MEM p.163*

And in another religious text:

Pure Water, that purifies everything,  
causes the sick to be calm.

*Assyrian Text K4609, ABT2 p.11:(Rev.).10ff., TAB2 p.62; cf. MEM p.163*

Among the many variant ‘water’ metaphors for the creative Power are the Water of emancipation and the Water of Memory. In the Manichaean manuscripts in Chinese found in Chinese Turkestan, the writer prays to Jesus for deliverance from his sins and from the prison of birth and death. Included in this prayer, the unknown writer says:

Pray give me the fragrant Water of emancipation.  
cleanse my wonderful nature from dust and dirt.

*Manichaean Hymns, LSMH p.178:30*

In the Christian gospels, it is said that while John the Baptist baptized with water, Jesus baptized “with the Holy Ghost” and “with fire”.<sup>2</sup> The origin of the story is probably Mark, from whom the other gospel writers took the account, and the authenticity of the statement is uncertain. However, when Jesus is baptized by John, Mark relates:

And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens  
opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him.

*Mark 1:10, KJV*

The effect of John’s baptism on Jesus is that Jesus has immediate access to the heavenly regions. It seems, therefore, that John’s baptism must have been of a spiritual and mystical nature, and it is likely that Mark’s account is an externalization of a spiritual truth. The “water” used by John would have been the Water of Life, the Creative Word, the Holy Spirit. Similarly, the “Holy Ghost” and the “fire” or light with which Jesus baptized was again the same Spirit. According to the prevailing scholarly opinion, Mark had never met Jesus, and the evidence of his gospel suggests that it is unlikely that he had ever been to Palestine. Probably writing in Rome, thirty or forty years after the death of Jesus to bolster the faith of the early Christian community, Mark’s intention in this account was to give Jesus a higher spiritual standing than John the Baptist, something which may not, in fact, have been the case.

In some gnostic writings, ‘water’ has also been used as a term for the inner realms of creation.

See also: **Living Water, Water of Memory, waters** (4.1).

1. *Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXIX, MPB p.24.*

2. *Mark 1:8–11; Matthew 3:11–17; Luke 3:15–22; John 1:25–33.*

**Water of Life See Living Water.**

**Water of Memory** According to Greek mythology, when the souls of mortals left this world they went to the underworld, *Hadēs*. There, if they drank the waters of forgetfulness from the River Lethe, located on the left of the House of *Hadēs*, they forgot all their past. But if, according to the doctrines attributed to the semilegendary Orpheus, the souls drank from the Wellspring of *Mnemosynē*, also known as the Lake or Water of Memory, they would be granted some degree of heavenly bliss. *Mnemosynē* was the Greek goddess of memory, and the mother, by *Zeus*, of the nine Muses. One of the Orphic tablets reads:

You shall find,  
     on the left of the House of *Hadēs*, a wellspring,  
     and by the side thereof standing a white cypress:  
 To this wellspring approach not near.  
 But you shall find another by the Lake of Memory,  
     cold water flowing forth,  
     and there are Guardians before it,  
 Say: "I am a child of earth and of starry heaven;  
 And lo, I am parched with thirst and I perish.  
 Give me quickly the cold water  
     flowing forth from the Lake of Memory."

And of themselves they will give thee  
     to drink from the holy Wellspring.  
 And thereafter, among the other heroes,  
     you shall have lordship....

*The Petelia Tablet, tr. Gilbert Murray, in HWP pp.38–39*

Mystically, the Water of Memory is the 'drink' which reminds the soul of its own true nature, permitting it to cast off the oblivion, forgetfulness or spiritual ignorance into which it has fallen in this world. It is the Living Water of the creative Power. The expression appears in this context in one of the Manichaean psalms, where the souls of this world are referred to as "O you that sleep in hell":

The Light has shone forth for you;  
 O you that sleep in hell ...  
     drink the Water of Memory, cast away oblivion.



He that desires healing,  
let him come to the Physician.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCXLVIII; cf. MPB p.57*

See also: **cup of forgetfulness** (6.2).

**Well, Well of Water, Wellspring, Wellspring of Life** A variant of the Living Water metaphor, found most commonly in the Mandaean literature, depicting the eternal Spring of the Creative Word flowing out of God into the creation:

This is a Wellspring of Life,  
which sprang forth from the place of Life:  
We drink thereof, of this Fount of Life,  
which Life (God) transmitted, ...  
Which crossed worlds, came,  
cleft the heavens and was revealed.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 45, CPM p.41*

The term also appears in John's gospel as a "well of water springing up into everlasting life".<sup>1</sup>

See also: **Living Water, Waters**.

1. *John 4:14, KJV*.

**wind** (Gk. *pneuma*, He. *ruah*) Words for wind, breath and spirit are the same in Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and a number of other languages of the ancient Middle East, the terms and their variants commonly appearing in various wordplays. In John's gospel, Jesus says:

The wind bloweth where it listeth,  
and thou hearest the sound thereof,  
but canst not tell whence it cometh,  
and whither it goeth:  
So is every one that is born of the Spirit.

*John 3:8, KJV*

Here, the translation could equally well have been, "The Spirit bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof," meaning that the Holy

Spirit comes and goes with the mysteriousness of the wind. No one who is “born again”<sup>1</sup> or baptized with the Spirit can know when they will hear its sound or sweet melody, nor can it be said from which direction it will come, since it comes from within.

As an image, wind has many poetic possibilities. On the cooling wind are borne refreshing and revitalizing fragrances and perfumes, welcome in hot climates. In fact, in a number of languages, the words for fragrance were also derived from the same root as those for wind, breath and spirit. Since fragrance was also a favourite metaphor for the sweet Word of God, renewing and revitalizing the soul, the Manichaean writings contain many such references. For instance:

From the gods has come lord Mānī,  
the God with the dear Name.  
To paradise he leads us up,  
where the wind brings forth sweet scent.  
God, the righteous One, has come from the paradise of light,  
the helpful One, the truly powerful One.

*Manichaean Hymns, HR2 pp.92–93, ML pp.52–53*

The “wind” of the “paradise of light” that “brings forth sweet scent” is the Spirit or the Word of God.

In another passage, the writer is describing how all creation has been manifested out of the divine eternity, the “land of light”, through “five pure Thoughts”, the five essences or Sounds in which the Word manifests at different levels of creation. Trying to express something of its sweetness and bliss, the writer says that this creative Power “is fragrant with sweet breezes”, implying the sweetness and joy of the spiritual atmosphere of the “land of light”:

All gods and deities were evoked  
and established by Him (the Father of Greatness);  
All rejoice in Him and give Him praise.  
The land of light (manifested all creation)  
... by its five pure Thoughts.  
It is fragrant with sweet breezes;  
It shines in all regions....  
Powers, gods and deities, jewels and joyful *aeons* (realms),  
trees, springs and plants rejoice in Him daily.

*Manichaean Hymns, PAH pp.443–44, RMP al; cf. ML p.118*

In another psalm, the Saviour himself, in this case Mānī, is likened to the wind – or Spirit:

A north wind blowing upon us is our lord Mānī,  
that we may put out with him,  
and sail to the land of light.

*Psalms of Heracleidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.193*

In the Middle East, the “north wind” brings cooler air, and sometimes rain to the parched land. It is also welcome to Mediterranean sailors. Here, it implies not only the spiritual refreshment brought by a Master, but also the Spirit by which the soul sails into the “land of light”.

See also: **Breath of God, Living Air, pneuma, ruah** (5.1).

1. *John* 3:3–7, *KJV*.

**Wisdom, Wisdom of God** (He. *Ḥokhmah*, Gk. *Sophia*) One of the most common ancient Middle Eastern terms used for the creative Power, the Word or *Logos* of God. As a metaphor for the creative Power, the origins of the term are unclear. Probably the first recorded user of such terms is Zarathushtra. Writing around 1500 BCE, he used the Avestan term *Xratu* (Wisdom) for the divine creative power. He also used the term *Mazdā*, meaning Lord of Wisdom, as a term for God. Whether – in this instance – there is any connection between Zoroastrianism and early Judaic terminology is unknown. Nevertheless, the two would certainly have come into contact with each other, not only as Middle Eastern neighbours, but also during the Babylonian exile of the Israelites during the sixth century BCE.

It may not be coincidental, therefore, that one of the earliest references to Wisdom as a divine Power is in an ancient Semitic text, the *Teachings of Aḥikar*, stemming from the fifth century BCE. Wisdom is a feminine noun in Greek, Hebrew and other Semitic languages, and is commonly referred to as a ‘she’:

Wisdom is of the gods,  
indeed, she is dear to the gods.  
Her kingdom is eternal.  
She is established in heaven,  
for the Lord of the holy ones has exalted her.

*Teachings of Aḥikar* 6–7:94–95 (2:13); cf. ANET p.428, OTP2 499

It is in the biblical Wisdom literature, however, that the term first appears in a clearly definitive manner. Using a characteristic literary style of the times, in a passage from *Proverbs*, probably dating from around the fifth century BCE, Wisdom herself ‘speaks’:

*Yahweh* created me (Wisdom) when His purpose first unfolded,  
 before the oldest of His works.  
 From everlasting I was firmly set,  
 from the beginning, before earth came into being.

The deep was not, when I was born,  
 there were no springs to gush with water.  
 Before the mountains were settled,  
 before the hills, I came to birth;  
 Before He made the earth, the countryside,  
 or the first grains of the world's dust.  
 When he fixed the heavens firm, I was there,  
 when He drew a ring on the surface of the deep,  
 when He thickened the clouds above,  
 when He fixed fast the springs of the deep,  
 when He assigned the sea its boundaries, ...  
 when He laid down the foundations of the earth –  
 I was by His side, a master craftsman,  
 delighting Him day after day,  
 ever at play in His presence,  
 at play everywhere in His world,  
 delighting to be with the sons of men.

*Proverbs 8:22–31, JB*

Expanding upon the same theme, in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, a Greek composition probably dating from the mid-first century BCE, there are some exquisite passages concerning the nature of Wisdom:

For within her is a spirit intelligent, holy,  
 unique, manifold, subtle,  
 active, incisive, unsullied,  
 lucid, invulnerable, benevolent, sharp,  
 irresistible, beneficent, loving to man,  
 steadfast, dependable, unperturbed,  
 almighty, all-surveying,  
 penetrating all, intelligent,  
 pure, and most subtle spirits;  
 For Wisdom is quicker to move than any motion;  
 She is so pure she pervades and permeates all things.

She is a Breath of the Power of God,  
 pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty;  
 Hence nothing impure can find a way into her.

She is a reflection of the eternal light,  
 untarnished mirror of God's active Power,  
 image of His goodness.  
 Although alone, she can do all:  
 herself unchanging, she makes all things new.  
 In each generation, she passes into holy souls:  
 she makes them friends of God and prophets;  
 For God loves only the man who lives with Wisdom.

She is indeed more splendid than the sun,  
 she outshines all the constellations;  
 Compared with light she takes first place,  
 for light must yield to night;  
 But over Wisdom,  
 evil can never triumph.  
 She deploys her strength from one end of the earth to the other,  
 ordering all things for good.

*Wisdom of Solomon 7:22–30, 8:1, JB*

Wisdom does all things, says the poet. Furthermore, she is always present in the world in the form of a mystic: “In each generation, she passes into holy souls: she makes them friends of God and prophets; for God loves only the man who lives with Wisdom.”

Another of the texts from the Jewish Wisdom literature, the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*, written in Hebrew around 190 BCE and translated into Greek some sixty years later by the author's grandson, describes Wisdom in similar terms:

Before all other things, Wisdom was created,  
 shrewd understanding (mystic insight) is everlasting.  
 For whom has the root of Wisdom ever been uncovered?  
 Her resourceful ways, who knows them?  
 One only is wise, terrible indeed,  
 seated on His throne, the Lord.

He himself has created her, looked on her and assessed her,  
 and poured her out on all His works  
 to be with all mankind as His gift,  
 and He conveyed her to those who love Him.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 1:4–10, JB*

Wisdom is again portrayed as God's creative Power, created by Him for this purpose – God has “poured her out on all His works”. But the writer

also says that she is present with “all mankind”. In fact, *Proverbs*, the *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach* and the *Wisdom of Solomon* are notable for their exhortations to tread the path leading to personal experience of divine Wisdom. The writer of *Proverbs*, speaking in the name of Wisdom, describes the joy and sense of fulfilment of those who follow this path:

And now, my sons, listen to me;  
Listen to instruction and learn to be wise,  
do not ignore it.  
Happy those who keep my ways!  
Happy the man who listens to me,  
who day after day watches at my gates  
to guard the portals.

For the man who finds me finds life,  
he will win favour from *Yahweh*;  
But he who does injury to me does hurt to his own soul,  
all who hate me are in love with death.

*Proverbs 8:32–36, JB*

And again:

Happy the man who discovers Wisdom,  
the man who gains discernment (spiritual enlightenment);  
Gaining her is more rewarding than silver,  
more profitable than gold.  
She is beyond the price of pearls,  
nothing you could covet is her equal;  
In her right hand is length of days,  
in her left hand, riches and honour.  
Her ways are delightful ways,  
her paths all lead to contentment.  
She is a Tree of Life for those who hold her fast:  
those who cling to her live happy lives.  
By Wisdom, *Yahweh* set the earth on its foundation.

*Proverbs 3:13–19, JB*

And:

The beginning of wisdom? The acquisition of Wisdom;  
At the cost of all you have,  
acquire perception (spiritual enlightenment).  
Hold her close, and she will make you great;  
Embrace her, and she will be your pride.

She will set a crown of grace on your head,  
present you with a glorious diadem.

*Proverbs 4:7–9, JB*

Similarly, Jesus ben Sirach writes of the self-discipline required to tread the path of Wisdom:

Wisdom brings up her own sons,  
and cares for those who seek her.  
Whoever loves her loves life,  
those who wait on her early will be filled with happiness.  
Whoever holds her close will inherit honour,  
and wherever he walks the Lord will bless him.  
Those who serve her minister to the Holy One,  
and the Lord loves those who love her.  
Whoever obeys her judges aright,  
and whoever pays attention to her dwells secure.

If he trusts himself to her he will inherit her,  
and his descendants will remain in possession of her;  
For though she takes him at first through winding ways,  
bringing fear and faintness on him,  
plaguing him with her discipline until she can trust him,  
and testing him with her ordeals,  
in the end she will lead him back to the straight road,  
and reveal her secrets to him.  
If he wanders away, she will abandon him,  
and hand him over to his fate.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 4:11–22, JB*

And again:

My son, from your earliest youth choose instruction,  
and, till your hair is white, you will keep finding Wisdom.  
Cultivate her like the ploughman and the sower,  
and wait for her fine harvest;  
For in tilling her, you will toil a little while,  
but very soon you will be eating her crops.

How very harsh she is to the undisciplined!  
The senseless man does not stay with her for long:  
she will weigh on him like a heavy stone,  
and he will lose no time in throwing her off;

For discipline is true to her name,  
she is not accessible to many.

Listen, son, and take my warning:  
do not reject my advice:  
Put your feet into her fetters,  
and your neck into her harness;  
Give your shoulder to her yoke,  
do not be restive in her reins;  
Court her with all your soul,  
and with all your might keep in her ways;  
Go after her and seek her; she will reveal herself to you;  
Once you hold her, do not let her go.

For in the end you will find rest in her,  
and she will take the form of joy for you;  
Her fetters you will find are a strong defence,  
her harness, a robe of honour.  
Her yoke will be a golden ornament,  
her reins, purple ribbons;  
You will wear her like a robe of honour.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 6:18–31, JB*

He also counsels finding a suitable teacher of Wisdom, a “man of understanding”. “Let your feet wear out his doorstep,” he advises:

If you wish, my son, you can acquire instruction:  
if you give your mind to it, subtlety will be yours.  
If you love listening, you will learn:  
if you lend an ear, Wisdom will be yours.

Attend the gathering of elders:  
if there is a wise man there, attach yourself to him.  
Listen willingly to any discourse coming from God:  
do not let shrewd proverbs escape you.

If you see a man of understanding, visit him early:  
let your feet wear out his doorstep.  
Reflect on the injunctions of the Lord:  
busy yourself at all times with his commandments.  
He will strengthen your mind,  
and the Wisdom you desire will be granted you.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 6:32–37, JB*



Finding a teacher and steadfastly following the path of Wisdom, he continues, leads to great spiritual wealth:

Happy the man who meditates on Wisdom,  
and reasons (meditates) with good sense,  
who studies her ways in his heart,  
and ponders her secrets.

He pursues her like a hunter,  
and lies in wait by her path;  
He peeps in at her windows,  
and listens at her doors;  
He lodges close to her house,  
and fixes his peg in her walls;  
He pitches his tent at her side,  
and lodges in an excellent lodging;  
He sets his children in her shade,  
and camps beneath her branches;  
He is sheltered by her from the heat,  
and in her glory he makes his home.

Whoever fears (is in awe of) the Lord will act like this,  
and whoever grasps the Law (*Torah*) will obtain Wisdom.  
She will come to meet him like a mother,  
and receive him like a virgin bride.  
She will give him the Bread of Understanding to eat,  
and the Water of Wisdom to drink.  
He will lean on her and will not fall,  
he will rely on her and not be put to shame.  
She will raise him high above his neighbours,  
and in full assembly she will open his mouth.  
He will find happiness and a crown of joy,  
he will inherit an everlasting name.

Foolish men will not gain possession of her,  
nor will sinful men set eyes on her.  
She stands remote from pride,  
and liars cannot call her to mind.  
Praise is unseemly in a sinner's mouth,  
since it has not been put there by the Lord.  
For praise should only be uttered in Wisdom,  
and the Lord himself then prompts it.

The unknown author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* also expands at length on the virtues of following the path of mystic Wisdom. Wisdom, he says, is a “friend to man” who “fills the whole world”, and knows all things. Here, Wisdom is also equated with the Holy Spirit:

Wisdom will never make its way into a crafty soul,  
nor stay in a body that is in debt to sin;  
The Holy Spirit of instruction shuns deceit,  
it stands aloof from reckless purposes,  
is taken aback when iniquity appears.

Wisdom is a Spirit, a friend to man, ...  
since God sees into the innermost parts of him,  
truly observes his heart,  
and listens to his tongue.  
The Spirit of the Lord, indeed, fills the whole world,  
and that which holds all things together  
knows every word that is said.

*Wisdom of Solomon 1:4–7, JB*

Wisdom, he goes on, seeks out those who seek her:

Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim.  
By those who love her she is readily seen,  
and found by those who look for her.  
Quick to anticipate those who desire her,  
she makes herself known to them.

Watch for her early and you will have no trouble:  
you will find her sitting at your gates.  
Even to think about her is understanding fully grown;  
Be on the alert for her and anxiety will quickly leave you.  
She herself walks about looking for those who are worthy of her,  
and graciously shows herself to them as they go,  
in every thought of theirs coming to meet them.

*Wisdom of Solomon 6:12–16, JB*

The writer then prays for the guidance of God which comes through the divine Wisdom:

May God grant me to speak as He would wish  
and express thoughts worthy of His gifts,  
since He himself is the guide of Wisdom,  
since He directs the sages.

We are indeed in His hand, we ourselves and our words,  
 with all our understanding, too, and technical knowledge.  
 It was He who gave me true knowledge of all that is...

All that is hidden, all that is plain,  
 I have come to know,  
 instructed by Wisdom who designed them all.

*Wisdom of Solomon 7:15–21, JB*

The author, writing as if he were Solomon himself, then speaks of his personal search for Wisdom. He realizes that “Immortality is found in being kin to Wisdom,”<sup>1</sup> and also that “I could not master Wisdom but by the gift of God – a mark itself of understanding to know whose the bounty was”:<sup>2</sup>

And so I prayed, and understanding was given me:  
 I entreated, and the Spirit of Wisdom came to me;  
 I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones:  
     compared with her, I held riches as nothing.  
 I reckoned no priceless stone to be her peer,  
     for compared with her, all gold is a pinch of sand,  
     and beside her, silver ranks as mud.

I loved her more than health or beauty,  
     preferred her to the light,  
     since her radiance never sleeps.  
 In her company, all good things came to me,  
     at her hands, riches not to be numbered.

All these I delighted in, since Wisdom brings them,  
     but as yet I did not know she was their mother.  
 What I learned without self-interest,  
     I pass on without reserve:  
 I do not intend to hide her riches.  
 For she is an inexhaustible treasure to men,  
     and those who acquire it win God’s friendship,  
     commended as they are to Him by the benefits of her teaching.

*Wisdom of Solomon 7:7–14, JB*

And again:

She it was I loved and searched for from my youth;  
 I resolved to have her as my bride,  
     I fell in love with her beauty.

Her closeness to God lends lustre to her noble birth,  
 since the Lord of all has loved her.  
 Yes, she is an initiate in the mysteries of God's knowledge,  
 making choice of the works He is to do.

*Wisdom of Solomon 8:2–4, JB*

In the Greek mystical expression of those times, the “mysteries” referred both to the external teachings regarding esoteric matters, which were commonly kept secret, and also to the inner mystic experience of these esoteric “mysteries”. To be accepted into any school was initiation, its character varying from school to school.

Wisdom, the writer of the *Wisdom of Solomon* continues, is the essence of all things; whatever a person desires or seeks is fulfilled in her. Her inner company bestows happiness and bliss, whatever a person's endeavours or work in life:

If in this life wealth be a desirable possession,  
 what is more wealthy than Wisdom whose work is everywhere?  
 Or if it be the intellect that is at work,  
 where is there a greater than Wisdom, designer of all?  
 Or if it be virtue you love,  
 why, virtues are the fruit of her labours,  
 since it is she who teaches temperance and prudence,  
 justice and fortitude;  
 Nothing in life is more serviceable to men than these.  
 Or if you are eager for wide experience,  
 she knows the past, she forecasts the future;  
 She knows how to turn maxims, and solve riddles;  
 She has foreknowledge of signs and wonders,  
 of the unfolding of the ages and the times.

*Wisdom of Solomon 8:5–8, JB*

A similar manner of expression is found in the psalms of praise and gratitude found among the pre-Christian Dead Sea Scrolls. Evidently familiar with the Judaic Wisdom literature, the unknown writer says that everything has been made and ordered by Wisdom:

By Thy Wisdom all things exist from eternity,  
 and before creating them Thou knewest their works  
 for ever and ever.  
 Nothing is done without Thee,  
 and nothing is known unless Thou desire it.

Thou hast created all the spirits,  
and hast established a Statute and Law  
for all their works.

*Thanksgiving Hymns IX:1–10 (6), CDSS p.253*

“Statute” and “Law” are also terms for Wisdom or the Word. Again, the same writer indicates that this Wisdom can be known by man, bringing knowledge and understanding of all things in creation, “Thy marvellous deeds”:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord,  
God of mercy and abundant grace;  
For Thou hast made known Thy Wisdom to me,  
that I should recount Thy marvellous deeds,  
keeping silence neither by day nor by night!

*Thanksgiving Hymns XVIII:10–15 (20), CDSS p.285*

He also says that through the mystic love of God, and through “contemplating the mysteries of Thy Wisdom”, he has been enabled to seek God.

And I have loved Thee freely  
and with all my heart;  
Contemplating the mysteries of Thy Wisdom,  
I have sought Thee.

*Thanksgiving Hymns VI:25–30 (5), CDSS p.249*

Moving forward by perhaps two centuries, it is clear that from the earliest Christian times, the Wisdom literature was well known and was understood mystically. In the New Testament, for instance, there are a number of references to Wisdom as God’s creative Power, as in Luke’s gospel:

Therefore also said the Wisdom of God,  
I will send them prophets and apostles,  
and some of them they shall slay and persecute.

*Luke 11:49, KJV*

Similarly, the letter attributed to James the brother of Jesus echoes the eulogy of Wisdom found in the *Wisdom of Solomon*:

The Wisdom that is from above is first pure,  
then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated,  
full of mercy and good fruits,  
without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

*James 3:17–18, KJV*

Paul, with his Judaic background, is of course familiar with the term. As he writes in *1 Corinthians*:

But we speak the Wisdom of God in a mystery,  
even the hidden Wisdom,  
which God ordained before the world unto our glory.

*1 Corinthians 2:7, KJV*

Paul also equates the power which incarnated as Jesus with “Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God”.<sup>3</sup>

Among the writings of the earliest Christian fathers, the Word or *Logos* is definitively identified with Wisdom. Justin Martyr (d.c. 165 CE) equates Wisdom, the Word and the Son with other terms used to describe the same Power:

I am now going to give you, my friends, another testimony from the scriptures that God before all His other creatures begat as the Beginning, a certain spiritual Power proceeding from Himself, which is called the Holy Spirit, sometimes the Glory of the Lord, and sometimes Son, and sometimes Wisdom, and sometimes Angel, and sometimes God, and sometimes Lord and *Logos*, and on another occasion he calls himself Captain, when he appeared in human form to Joshua the son of Nun....

The Word of Wisdom, who is himself this God begotten of the Father of all things, and Word, and Wisdom, and Power, and the Glory of the Begetter, will bear evidence to me, when he speaks by Solomon, the following....

*Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 61; cf. OPJG pp.20–21, WJMA p.170*

He then quotes part of the passage from *Proverbs*, concerning Wisdom, “*Yahweh* created me when His purpose first unfolded, ...” and so on.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Irenaeus, the second-century Bishop of Lyons, also equates the *Logos* with the Son, the Holy Spirit and Wisdom when he says:

We have abundantly shown that the *Logos*, that is the Son, was always with the Father, and he says through Solomon (in *Proverbs*) that *Sophia* (Wisdom) also, who is the Spirit, was with Him before any created thing. For “the Lord, by Wisdom, set the earth on its foundations.”<sup>5</sup>

*Irenaeus, Against Heresies IV:20.3; cf. AH1 pp.440–41, OPJG p.23*

And again:

So there is one God, who by His Word and His Wisdom has made all things.

*Irenaeus, Against Heresies IV:20.4, OPJG p.23; cf. AH1 p.441*

In the apocryphal writings of early Christian times, Jesus is again identified with the Word and with Wisdom. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for instance, the apostle Judas Thomas speaks of Jesus as the “wise Word”:

What shall I think concerning your beauty, O Jesu,  
and what shall I tell of you, I know not;  
Or rather I am not able, for I have no power to declare it.  
Glory to you, wise Word!  
Glory to you, Hidden One who has many forms! ...  
Glory to your Godhead, who for us put on manhood!

*Acts of Thomas 80; cf. AAA p.216, ANT p.401*

Similarly, in the *Odes of Solomon*, the odist speaks of Wisdom as the creation of the Father:

The Father of Knowledge  
is the Word of Knowledge.  
He who created Wisdom  
is wiser than His works.  
He who created me when yet I was not,  
knew what I should do when I came into being.  
Therefore, in His abundant grace,  
He had compassion for me,  
and permitted me to ask from Him,  
and to benefit from His sacrifice (of coming here).

*Odes of Solomon 7:7–10*

The gnostics also wrote extensively of Wisdom (*Sophia*) as the creative Power. In gnostic mythology, it is also *Sophia*, personalized as the feminine *Pistis Sophia*, who comes down into this world and is taken captive, forgets herself or falls fast asleep, and needs to be rescued by a Saviour before she can return to her eternal home. In other texts, Wisdom is again described both as the creative Power and as the way back to God, as in the *Sentences of Sextus*:

Wisdom leads the soul to the place of God.  
There is no kinsman of the truth except Wisdom.

*Sentences of Sextus 16:167–168, NHS28 pp.304–5*

Similarly, the author of the *Three Steles of Seth* addresses God:

Salvation has come to us; from You is salvation.  
 You are Wisdom (*Sophia*), You are knowledge,  
 You are the Truth.  
 On account of You is Life; from You is Life.

*Three Steles of Seth* 123; cf. *NHS30* pp.404–5

The subject is explained extensively in the *Teachings of Silvanus*, a beautiful and carefully constructed homily or essay in the style of Hellenistic Wisdom literature, some passages echoing *Proverbs*. Here, Wisdom is described as a “gift”, given by Christ – the ‘anointed one’ or Saviour. The writer also speaks of the divine *Logos* and the *Nous*, meaning the mystic Power of God in creation, both terms being synonymous with Wisdom. It is by this Power, he says, that man is led upon the right path back to God:

My son, listen to my teaching which is good and useful, and end the sleep (of physical existence) which weighs heavily upon you. Depart from the forgetfulness (of God) which fills you with darkness. If you had been unable to do anything, I would not have said these things to you; but Christ has come in order to give you this gift. Why (then) do you pursue the darkness when the light is at your disposal? Why do you drink stale water when sweet is available to you? Wisdom summons you, yet you desire folly. Not by your own desire do you do these things, but it is the animal nature within you that does them.

Wisdom summons you in her goodness, saying, “Come to me, all of you, O foolish ones, that you may receive a gift, the understanding which is good and excellent. I am giving to you a high-priestly garment which is woven entirely out of Wisdom....”

For the Tree of Life is Christ. He is Wisdom. For he is Wisdom; he is also the Word (*Logos*); he is the Life, the Power and the Door. He is the Light, the Angel and the good Shepherd. Entrust yourself to this one who became all for your sake.

Knock on (within) yourself as upon a door, and walk upon (within) yourself as on a straight road. For if you walk on the road, it is impossible for you to go astray. And if you knock with Wisdom, you knock on hidden treasures.

For since he (Christ) is Wisdom, he makes the foolish man wise. Wisdom is a holy kingdom and a shining robe. It is like much gold which gives you great honour. The Wisdom of God became a type of fool (became man) for you so that it might take you up, O foolish one, and make you a wise man....



O Lord Almighty, how much glory shall I give You?  
 No one has been able to glorify God adequately.  
 It is You who have given glory to Your Word  
     in order to save everyone, O merciful God.  
 It is he (the *Logos*) who has come from Your mouth  
     and has risen from Your heart –  
 The First-born, the Wisdom,  
     the Prototype, the First Light.

For he is a light from the Power of God, and he is an emanation of the pure glory of the Almighty. He is the spotless mirror (reflection) of the working of God, and he is the image of His goodness. For he is also the light of the eternal Light. He is the eye which looks at the invisible Father, always serving and acting by the Father's will. He alone was begotten by the Father's good pleasure. For he is an incomprehensible Word, and he is Wisdom and Life. He gives life to and nourishes all living things and powers. Just as the soul gives life to all the members (of the body), he rules all with (His) Power and gives life to them. For he is the beginning and the end of everyone, watching over all and encompassing them. He is concerned about everybody, and he rejoices and also mourns. On the one hand, he mourns for those who have received as their lot the place of punishment (this world); on the other, he is concerned about every one whom he arduously brings to instruction (initiates into his fold). But he rejoices over everyone who dwells in purity.

*Teachings of Silvanus 88–89, 106–7, 112–13; cf.  
 NHS30 pp.290–93, 336–39, 352–57*

Among the writings of the Mandaeans, too, are found a multitude of references to Wisdom. In Mandaean terminology, God is referred to as Life, the “Great First Life” and by other similar terms:

Let there be light, let there be light!  
 Let there be the light of the Great First Life!  
 There shone forth Wisdom, ...  
     which came from the Source.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 5; cf. CPM p.4*

From God emanates the creative Power, identified with Wisdom, which – in another poem – is identified with the Saviour who fills souls with this Wisdom and shows them the way home to the realms of eternal life:

You enlarge our steps and lift our eyes heavenwards.  
 You descend and give us dwellings by Springs of Life.  
 You pour into and fill us  
 with your Wisdom, your Word and your goodness.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 24; cf. CPM p.20*

Among the Manichaean writings, there are again many references to Wisdom as the creative and manifesting Power of God who is identified with the Father, and with the Son, as the 'First-born' or primary emanation of the Father, whose supreme characteristic is that of love:

Holy love is the mark of the Father,  
 the knowledge of Wisdom, the mark of the Son,  
 the fulfilment of the commandments, the mark of the Holy Spirit.  
 The Light that is on high is the Father,  
 the Power of God that supports the creation is the Son,  
 the Wisdom that emanates forth is the Holy Spirit.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.116*

In another poem, Wisdom is identified as something that can be "practised". Correctly meditating upon Wisdom, says the psalmist, opens the 'inner eyes of the soul'. The soul 'strips off' or leaves the body, seeing within and travelling in the inner realms of light. But all this, says the writer, is the gift of the Saviour:

I have constantly practised your holy Wisdom,  
 which has opened the eyes of my soul  
 to the light of your glory;  
 And made me see those things that are hidden,  
 and those that are visible:  
 The things of the abyss (this world)  
 and the things of the Height (God)....

I strip off from myself the destructible body,  
 the habitation of the powers of death;  
 And ascend on high to your *aeons* (the eternal realm)  
 from which I was once separated;  
 That I may receive your gifts, my merciful God,  
 my Saviour, my Rescuer.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXVIII; cf. MPB pp.86–87*

Wisdom also has the power to forgive sins:

Forgive the sins of them that know your mystery,  
to whom there has been revealed  
the knowledge of the secret of the Most High,  
through your holy Wisdom wherein there is no Error (Illusion).

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXII; cf. MPB p.8*

Wisdom is the way of escape from rebirth:

The (human) beings who have been deceived  
by the various religions, are terrified.  
They find no way out (escape, salvation) ...  
and Wisdom they do not know.  
Through blind habits, they are ruined.  
Their nature has been changed  
into eternal bondage and ruin for them.  
They fall into hell after hell (rebirth after rebirth),  
from which they find no way out,  
and in which there is neither peace nor salvation.

*Manichaean Hymns, MM3 p.886ff., RMP bh; cf. ML p.140*

Wisdom brings inner enlightenment. It is identical with the “Spirit” and an intimate of the “Holy One”, the Saviour:

Fair is your light, O Spirit:  
I would hear your Speech (Voice), O Holy One.  
Fair are your commandments, O Spirit:  
they have enlightened me without, O Holy One.  
Fair is your Wisdom, O Spirit:  
it has enlightened me within, O Holy One.  
Fair is your Love, O Spirit:  
it has been life unto my soul, O Holy One.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.169*

Wisdom is a constant power in creation, one with divine love:

You do not weary, O Wisdom:  
you do not give in, O Love.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.171*

Although, as a term for the creative Power, Wisdom is generally associated with the Middle East, there are also some references to the term from further afield. The Indian mystic, Dariyā Sāhib of Bihar, for example, is notable for his use of many Middle Eastern terms, including “Wisdom”:

Discard all low thoughts in the company of a *Sādhū*,  
and listening to the glory of Wisdom,  
obtain the Fruit of Immortality (*Amrit Phal*).

*Dariyā Sāhib, Gyān Ratna, Chaupāī 1720, DG2 p.233; cf. DSSB p.257*

See also: **al-‘Aql al-Awwal, Ḥokhmah, Word, Xratu.**

1. *Wisdom of Solomon* 8:17, *JB*.
2. *Wisdom of Solomon* 8:21, *JB*.
3. *1 Corinthians* 1:24, *KJV*.
4. *Proverbs* 8:21–36.
5. *Proverbs* 3:19.

### **Word, Word of God, Word of Knowledge, Word of Truth, Word of Wisdom**

The creative and active Power of God that created and constantly sustains the entire creation, moment by moment; the essence of all material substance and the life force within all souls. Nothing exists in the creation without this Power as the essence of its existence. It is the primal Vibration or Sound that moves the creation. Everything, from the tiniest subatomic particle to the orbiting of planets, the trajectory of stars and the spinning of galaxies is in movement. Without that movement, everything would collapse in on itself and cease to exist. Physical science describes the nature of these movements and relationships, but cannot say where the primal energy of movement comes from. Mystics say that this movement is a manifestation of the Creative Word.

In Christian and Judaic literature, the term is generally translated from the Greek *Logos*, the Latin *Verbum*, or the Hebrew *Davar*, *Millah* or *Ma’amar*. In Aramaic, the term is *Memra*, and there are many other synonyms in practically all languages.

It is called God’s Word because the creation is His utterance or emanation. Hence, it is also called His Voice, His Speech, His Breath and so on. This is not to be understood literally as the Speech of God, but as a way of depicting His creative process. Though the term has a long history of prior use, the best known usage in the Christian world is in the opening lines of John’s gospel:

In the beginning was the Word (*Logos*),  
and the Word (*Logos*) was with God,  
and the Word (*Logos*) was God.  
The same was in the beginning with God.  
All things were made by it;

And without it was not any thing made  
that was made.

*John 1:1–3; cf. KJV, TYN*

In popular conception, the Word of God is commonly understood to be the scriptures or the teachings concerning God. It is clear, however, from this passage that the Word is actually the divine creative power. John continues by saying that the source of life is God, through His Word, and that this life can also be seen within as light:

In it (the *Logos*) was life:  
and life was the light of men.

*John 1:4, TYN*

From earliest times, long before Jesus, the Word has been understood as the creative Power. The term can even be traced back to Sumerian times, two or three millennia BCE. Archaeological excavations during the last two centuries in what was once Mesopotamia, now Iraq, have unearthed the remains of a number of ancient cultures that once existed there. These civilizations were literate, using clay tablets on which to write everything from business documents to epic poems and sagas. Among the hundreds of thousands of these tablets found in places such as Nineveh, Lagash and Nippur are some that provide glimpses of mystical teachings from those ancient times.

A number of temples have also been unearthed, indicating an active religious life, which included a pantheon of gods like the Hindus and the ancient Greeks and Romans. Much of the writings concerning their gods are of a mythological character, like those of the later Greek gods, the heirs of the earlier Mesopotamian pantheon. Nevertheless, certain characteristics can be determined that are reminiscent of the ancient and universal mystic teachings.

The father of the Sumerian gods was *Anu*, the first-born of the primeval Sea, equivalent perhaps to the supreme divine Essence. *Anu* gave birth to *Enlil*, the Breath and the ‘Word’ of *Anu*, as in the hymn:

The spirit of the Word is *Enlil*,  
the spirit of the Heart is *Anu*.

*Sumerian Psalms 1:38–41, SBPL p.24*

The “Heart” here refers to the centre and source of life, while the “Word” is the expression of life. Hence, archaeologist and author N.K. Sandars comments, “*Enlil* is power in action, where *Anu* is power in being.”<sup>1</sup> This is the difference between the Creative Word and the supreme Lord of later mystical expression. In Sumerian mythology, *Enlil* is both a creative and a

destructive power, as indeed is the Word, which underlies all activity in the creation.

In Judaic literature, the term is clearly used in a mystic context, as in the *Psalms*. God has created by means of it:

By the Word (*Davar*) of the Lord were the heavens made,  
and all the host of them by the Breath of His Mouth.

*Psalm 33:6, JCL*

It is an ever present guide:

Thy Word (*Davar*) is a lamp to my feet,  
and a light to my path.

*Psalm 119:105, JCL*

It is a delight to those who have experienced it:

I rejoice at Thy Word (*Imra*),  
like one who finds great spoil.

*Psalm 119:162, KB*

And the devoted rise early in the morning to meditate longingly on it:

I rise before dawn, and I cry out;  
My hope in is Your Word (*Davar*).

*Psalm 119:147, JCL*

In *Numbers*, it says that one who does not come into contact with His Word, or “His Commandment”, will be “cut off” from God and have to face the consequences of his “iniquity”, a reference to the law of recompense for sin:

Because he has despised the Word (*Davar*) of the Lord,  
and has broken His Commandment (*Mitzvah*),  
that soul shall be utterly cut off;  
His iniquity shall be upon him.

*Numbers 15:31, JCL*

In other places, the meaning is ambiguous, but makes good sense if the meaning is that of the creative Power, as in a passage from *1 Samuel*, where Samuel subsequently anoints or perhaps initiates Saul. Much of the Hebrew Bible, even the seemingly historical sections, has been understood allegorically by later Jewish commentators, so there is ample precedent for a mystical interpretation of this passage:

And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the Word (*Davar*) of God."

Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, "Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be Captain over his inheritance?"

*1 Samuel 9:27, 10:1, KJV*

Since Jesus was regarded as an incarnation of the Word, there are naturally many instances in early Christian literature where the Word is depicted as the divine creative power. In the New Testament letter attributed to James the brother of Jesus, the writer says that souls have their source in this Word:

Of His own will begat He us with the Word (*Logos*) of Truth.

*James 1:18, KJV*

The author of *Hebrews* writes that everything in creation is made by the unseen hand of the Word:

Through faith, we understand that the worlds  
were framed by the Word (*Rhema*) of God;  
So that things which are seen  
were not made of things which do appear.

*Hebrews 11:3, KJV*

Likewise, in the *Acts of Peter*, Peter praises God as:

O eternal God, God of the heavens,  
God of unspeakable majesty,  
who has established all things by Your Word (*Verbum*).

*Acts of Peter III:II; cf. ANT p.305*

In the *Odes of Solomon*, the odist expands upon this theme, prefacing it with the statement that the Lord has filled him with the "Word of Truth". This Word, he says, has created everything and is manifested in all things, finally coming to dwell in a "Son of Man", a Saviour:

He has filled me with the Word (*Logos*) of Truth,  
that I may speak the same.  
And like flowing waters, Truth flows from my mouth,  
and my lips make known His fruits.

And it has caused His knowledge to abound in me,  
because the Mouth of the Lord is the true Word (*Logos*),  
and the door of His Light.

And the Most High has given it (the Word)  
to His *aeons* (inner realms and powers),  
which are the interpreters of His beauty,  
and the narrators of His glory,  
and the confessors of His counsel,  
and the heralds of His Thought (*Ennoia*),  
and the holy manifesters of His works.

For the subtlety of the Word (*Logos*) cannot be told,  
and like (the wonder of) its utterance,  
so too is its swiftness and its penetration.  
For its course is without end:  
it never falls, but stands impregnable,  
and no man knows its length or breadth.  
For like (the incomprehensibility of) its activity,  
so too is its end:  
For it is the light and the dawning of human thought.

By it, the *aeons* spoke to one another,  
and those that were silent acquired speech.  
From it came love and communion,  
and they spoke to one another of that which was within them.  
And they were empowered by the Word (*Logos*),  
and they knew Him who made them,  
because they were in harmony.  
For the Mouth of the Most High spoke to them,  
and His expression came about by means of it (the Word).

For the habitation of the Word (*Logos*) is a Son of Man,  
and its truth is love.  
Blessed are they who by means of him  
have understood everything,  
and have known the Lord in His Truth.

*Odes of Solomon 12:1–13*

In the *Acts of John*, the writer states his assurance of the identity and unity of the Word with the Word of Wisdom, the Holy Ghost, the Father and Jesus, when he has Jesus say:



I would keep tune with holy souls.  
 In me, know the Word (*Logos*) of Wisdom (*Sophia*).  
 Again with me say:  
 Glory be to You, Father;  
 Glory to you, Word (*Logos*);  
 Glory to you, Holy Ghost.

*Acts of John 96; cf. ANT p.254*

The gnostic writers also spoke extensively of the Creative Word, as in the *Trimorphic Protennoia*, where the poet writes in the name of the Word:

I alone am the Word (*Logos*), ineffable, unpolluted,  
 immeasurable, inconceivable.  
 It (the Word) is a hidden Light,  
 bearing a Fruit of Life,  
 pouring forth a Living Water  
 from the invisible, unpolluted, immeasurable Spring, ...  
 being unreproducible, an immeasurable Light,  
 the source of the All (the creation),  
 the Root of the entire *aeon* (creation).

It is the foundation that supports  
 every movement of the *aeons* (realms)  
 that belong to the mighty Glory.  
 It is the foundation of every foundation.  
 It is the (Life) Breath of the Powers....  
 And it is a Word (*Logos*) by virtue of Speech;  
 It was sent to illumine those who dwell in the darkness.

*Trimorphic Protennoia 46:14–18, 23–28, 30–32, NHS28 pp.424–25*

It is characteristic of many of these ancient writings that no distinction is made between the Voice or Word and its manifestation in a perfect Master or Saviour. At one moment, they speak of the mystic Power; at another, the meaning more clearly relates to the Saviour in human form. Sometimes, the meaning is intentionally ambiguous – it can apply both to the creative Power as well as to its human manifestation in a Master.

This is seen clearly in a Mandaean text where the writer speaks in the name of the Saviour or the Voice, and where the ‘speaking’ of the Saviour and the ‘hearing’ of his Voice carry the double meaning of both the outer teachings or voice of the Saviour and listening to his divine Word within:

If he to whom I speak listens,  
 and he to whom I call is established (initiated),

and is knit into the communion of Life,  
 and built into the great fabric of Reality –  
 I will take his hand and be his Saviour and Guide  
 to the great place of light  
 and to the everlasting abode.

If I speak to him and he hearkens not,  
 and call to him and he is not uplifted,  
 he will be put to the question  
 (have to face the account of his sins).  
 But I shall not be put to the question,  
 because of the Word of Truth (*Kūshṭā*) (within me).

*Mandaean Prayer Book 18; cf. CPM p.13*

This double meaning is also a characteristic of John's gospel:

Why do ye not understand my speech (*lalia*)?  
 Even because ye cannot hear my Word (*Logos*).

*John 8:43, KJV*

Understanding the true nature of the Word of God is the beginning of the highest mystic understanding, for the Creative Word is second only to God Himself.

See also: **Davar, Kalimah, Logos, Memra, Shabd.**

1. N.K. Sandars, *Epic of Gilgamesh*, EG p.24.

**Xratu** (Av) *Lit.* wisdom, knowledge; also, purpose, deliberation; the divine Wisdom, used by Zarathushtra for the creative Power of God. Addressing God in the *Gāthās*, he writes:

Yours is *Ārmaiti* (divine devotion),  
 Yours too the Wisdom (*Xratu*) which created life,  
 (the Wisdom of) Your Spirit (*Mainyu*), Lord supreme.  
 For to her (life) have You given the choice:  
 whether to leave the Shepherd's (*Vāstrya*) shelter,  
 or that of him who no (true) Shepherd (*Vāstrya*) ever was.

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 31:9; cf. DSZ p.202*

See also: **Wisdom.**

**Xshathrā, Xshathrā Vairya, Vohu Xshathrā** (Av) *Lit.* might, majesty, power, sovereignty, strength (*xshathrā*) + great, primal (*vohu*) or all-powerful (*vairya*); the might and majesty of *Ahurā Mazdā*, His power, His sovereignty, His strength; thus, the deathless and creative Power of God; parallel to the Sanskrit, *xshaṭra* (power, force). Its use in conjunction with the adjective *vohu* (first, great, primal) emphasizes its great and primal place in creation.

According to Zarathushtra, it is by *Xshathrā* or the Power of God that souls find their way to the mystic path and are drawn back to Him. It is His gift to devoted and loving souls, and with it comes immortality and the eternal enjoyment of His bliss. He says that *Xshathrā* is found in its purity only in the realm of *Ahurā Mazdā*, and that it conquers *druj* or untruth:

Therefore, *Ahurā*, Zarathushtra's choice  
has been Your Spirit (*Mainyu*), holiest and best;  
May Your Truth (*Ashā*) incarnate  
become for us a source of life and strength.  
And with Your Power (*Xshathrā*), resplendent as the sun,  
may Your *Ārmaiti* (divine devotion) dwell within us;  
May she bring blessings for all our endeavours,  
inspired by Your Primal Mind (*Vohu Manō*).

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 43:16; cf. DSZ p.456*

And:

You, O *Ahurā Mazdā*, I would worship, singing praises,  
with Truth (*Ashā*) and with Your Supreme Mind (*Vashista Manō*),  
and with Your calling Power (*Xshathrā*), too,  
so that the aspirant may walk upon the path,  
listening to catch Your revelation to the devotees  
of Your home on high (*garō demāna*).

*Zarathushtra, Yasna 50:4; cf. DSZ p.743*

See also: **Ameshā Spentās, Power of God.**

**yamin** (He) *Lit.* right; hence, right hand; metaphorically, divine protection and strength, often referring specifically to the Word of God.

See **Hand of God.**

**Yāqūtah al-Bayḏā', al-** (A), **Yāqūtah-'i Bayzā'** (P) *Lit.* the White (*Bayḏā'*) Corundum (*Yāqūtah*); identical in meaning to *al-Durrat al-Bayḏā'* (White Pearl).

See also: **al-Durrat al-Bayḏā'** (2.2).

**Yesh** (He) *Lit.* Something; existence; a name used in the Kabbalah for the second *sefirah* (emanation) of *Hokhmah* (Wisdom). *Hokhmah* is the creative Power. It is the one true, permanent substance which is the source of all life and its sustaining factor. *Yesh* emanates as *Hokhmah* from *Ayin* (Nothing, without substance). Thus, 'Something' was created from 'Nothing'.

The emanation of the first Something (*Yesh*) from the primal Nothing (*Ayin*) of the Godhead is described at length in the Kabbalah through its complex system of the successive emanations of the *sefirot* from the *Ayn-Sof* (the Godhead).

*Yesh* is also called 'azmut (substance). In *HaBaD* Hasidism, the term used is *Yeshut*.

See also: **sefirot, Yeshut.**

**Yeshut** (He) *Lit.* substance. In *HaBaD* Hasidism, a distinction is drawn between *kiyyum* (existence) and *Yeshut* (Substance). *Kiyyum* comprises the entire creation, including material existence, the realm of impermanent phenomena. *Yeshut* represents the divine Reality, which is the only truly existing Reality – the only real 'substance'. A *HaBaD* mystic explains:

There exists in the world no entity other than Him.... For there is no true substance (*yeshut*) other than Him. For if, because of the vessels and the concealment, other entities appear to be substantial (to exist), in reality they are not substantial at all. For He, may He be blessed, is the Substance (*Yeshut*) of all substances (*yeshut*), and there exists in reality no other substance (*yeshut*) but Him.

*Rabbi Aaron ha-Levi, Sha'arei ha-Yihud ve-ha-Emunah 1:2, in JS2 p.161*

Likewise, Rabbi Shne'ur Zalman, the first in the line of *HaBaD* mystics, writes:

Even though it appears to us that the worlds exist,  
this is a total lie.

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman, in JS2 p.161*

See also: 'azmut, **al-Dhāt** (2.2), **Yesh.**

**zabān** (P) *Lit.* tongue; thus, in a general metaphorical sense, speech or language. In Sufi poetry, *zabān* (tongue) symbolizes the Speech of God (*Kalām Allāh*), the divine Command (*Amr*). Some Sufis say it alludes to the mysteries (*asrār*).<sup>1</sup> Maghribī wrote:

From speechless silence,  
the world leapt forth with a Word,  
by the tale my adored One spun forth upon her tongue (*zabān*).

*Maghribī, in FNII p.67; cf. in SSEI p.89*

See also: **dahān, dahān-i kūchak, Mouth of God.**

1. ‘Irāqī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, *RLI* p.68, in *FNII* p.66, in *SSEI* p.88.

**ẓātī Nām** (P/U/Pu) *Lit.* inherent (*ẓātī*) Name (*Nām*); the essential Name; that Name which is of God’s Essence; the mystic Name or creative Power of God, as contrasted with the divine attributes (*ṣifātī*) or descriptive names.

See also: **al-Dhāt** (2.2), **Nām, ṣifāh** (2.2).

**zephyr** A word occasionally used in translation for terms that refer to the Word as the divine wind or Living Air.

See **breeze, Living Air, wind.**



## 3.2 DIVINE MUSIC

MANY MYSTICS HAVE TAUGHT that the creative Power can be heard by the soul as beautiful music on the inner planes of creation. They have also likened the sound of the different realms to that of different musical instruments. The instruments cited have varied from culture to culture, though certain instruments – such as the flute – have been commonly mentioned by mystics of all nationalities as descriptive of the music of the higher realms. Sometimes, some particular instrument is associated with the sound of a particular region.

Mystics have never suggested that the inner Music is actually the same as that of the instruments to which they have likened it, though the angels of heaven have sometimes been envisaged as playing on harps. Mystics have simply said that there is some resemblance, perhaps in general character, as with the feelings of yearning sometimes awakened by flute music.

This section focuses on these musical images. More personal descriptions of experiences of sound (and light) may be found in Part 2.

KEY ENTRIES: **divine Music**, **divine Music (Taoism)**, **Music (Cosmic)**, **vīṇā**.





**arghan, arghanūn (P), urghun (A)** The organ; derived from the Greek *organon*, probably via the Syriac; composed of a number of vertical reeds, connected to a keyboard and sounded through a bellows; no longer prevalent in Iran, though once an integral feature of the Sufi *samā* (a gathering for devotional music, dance and chanting).

References to music and musical instruments in Sufi mysticism refer to the divine Music which is heard with the inner faculty of hearing during mystic ascent. This Music is an aspect of the divine creative power, the Word, or Name, which permeates and enlivens the entire creation. It has a magnetic attraction, intoxicating the mystic and pulling him through the process of *mawt ikhtiyārī* (voluntary death, 'dying while living'). 'Aṭṭār speaks of the minstrel (the spiritual teacher) playing music that "subdues" the devotees – it absorbs their individuality into a higher reality:

The strains of the organ (*arghanūn*) the minstrel plays  
subdues the devotees.

*'Aṭṭār, in FNII p.128; cf. in SSEI p.169*

Throughout Sufi poetry, images of music mingle with those of wine and revelry to express the intoxicating bliss of the mystic experience. An unattributed Sufi writes:

I drink wine from a bowl from my mistress's hands,  
while playing an organ (*arghanūn*) and striking a bell.

*Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq, in TAT p.168, in FNII p.128; cf. in SSEI p.169*

**baṃsarī, bāmsarī, baṃsī (H/Pu)** The ancient Indian flute, also called the *bāmsurī*, *vaṃsh*, *vaṃshī*, *muralī*, *muraliyā*, *veṇu* and so on; from the word *vaṃsh*, meaning bamboo, from whose hollow stems Indian flutes have traditionally been constructed. In the Vedic period, the *baṃsarī* was known by the name of *tūṇava* and *nāḍī*. In Indian mythology, Kṛishṇa is commonly depicted as carrying a flute, symbolic of the divine Music of the higher realms from which he came.

The flute is one of the three celebrated instruments of Indian music, the other two being the *vīṇā* (a stringed instrument) and the *mṛidang* (a double-ended drum). There are many varieties of flute, varying in length from eight inches to thirty inches. The instrument consists of a simple narrow cylinder, of uniform bore, closed at one end and with a mouthpiece at the other. The range is in the order of two and a half octaves, the normal range of the human voice. These tones are produced from only six to eight holes, by varying the air pressure which is blown into the instrument.

A number of Indian mystics have likened the plaintive sound of the flute, full of longing and poignancy, to the sound of *bhanwar guphā* or *sohang*, the spiritual realm on the threshold of eternity. There, the soul sees, so to speak, the lights of *sach khaṇḍ* (true region) twinkling and beckoning in the distance, and is drawn forward by a deep sense of love and longing for its final and complete union with the Divine.

Bulleh Shāh speaks of the mystic flute, depicting the legendary Rānjhā as the Beloved, the Master. *Bamsī* is used throughout for “flute”:

Wonderful music does the Lord play on the flute (*bamsī*)!  
 O lord of the flute (*bamsī*), cowherd Rānjhā,  
 you are in tune with the whole world.  
 You rejoice, but I am in dire misery:  
 pray, harmonize my tune with yours.  
 Wonderful music does the Lord play on the flute!

O flute player, you are called Lord Kṛishṇa;  
 You play incomparable, wondrous music,  
 although you remain invisible to the eyes.  
 What a matchless game you play!  
 Wonderful music does the Lord play on the flute!

Everyone hears and talks of the music of the flute,  
 but rare is one who understands its meaning.  
 Whoever catches its unstruck (*anhad*) notes  
 becomes enamoured of the flute.  
 Wonderful music does the Lord play on the flute!

On hearing the plaintive notes of the flute,  
 I call out with joy in the manner of peacocks.  
 For I rejoice in its diverse tunes,  
 a single Note lies behind the entire symphony!  
 Wonderful music does the Lord play on the flute!

Long is the voyage of this flute:  
 whoever sought it, found it.  
 Simple (non-dual) is the refrain of this flute:  
 it created the attributes from the Essence.  
 Wonderful music does the Lord play on the flute!

This flute has five to seven stops,  
 each stop with its own distinctive note.

But one refrain breathes through them all,  
and it is this that has bewitched me.  
Wonderful music does the Lord play on the flute!

O Bullah, all my troubles have passed,  
the Beloved has come and stands at the door.  
Maintain your trade with the Word (*Kalmah*),  
then your Master will stand as witness.  
Wondrous music does the Lord play on the flute!

*Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt 28, KBS pp.46–48, SBSU pp.256–57; cf. BS pp.272–73*

The “single Note” that “lies behind the entire symphony” is the one Word, the one divine Melody. The “five to seven stops” are an allusion to the distinctive sounds heard in each of the inner realms. Some mystics have described the journey in “five” stages, others in “seven”. The Master standing as a “witness” means that the Master will come to the aid of the soul in the divine court of justice. He will give surety of good conduct, and pay all fines and punishments.

Paltū writes similarly of the sound of *sohang*:

The flute (*baṃsī*) rings in the sky (*gagan*),  
and my soul goes into ecstasy.  
My soul has gone into ecstasy,  
and has made its home in the eighth palace,  
from where the sound (*shabd*) of *sohang* arises,  
in which my soul is immersed.

*Paltū, Bānī 1, Kuṇḍalī 170:1–2, PSB1 p.72*

See also: **flute, muralī, nāy**.

**bāng-i nāy, bāng-i nay, bāng-i rubāb** (P) *Lit.* sound, shout or outcry (*bāng*) of the reed flute (*nāy, nay*), the sound of the rebec (*rubāb*). In Sufi terminology, the melody of the creative Power heard in the heavenly regions has been likened to a number of musical instruments, including the *nāy* (a flute made from a reed) and the *rubāb*. Ḥāfiẓ says that to establish contact with the creative Power, which he calls the “Water of Life”, the soul must seek the divine sweetness of intoxication with the *bāng-i rubāb*:

If you seek a trace of the Water of Life (*Āb-i Zindagī*),  
seek the sweet wine (of love)  
to the sound of the rebec (*bāng-i rubāb*).

*Ḥāfiẓ, Divān, DHM (17:9) p.49, DIH p.45; cf. DHWC (17:9) p.64*

Because of the plaintive sound of the flute or reed pipe (*nāy*), the *bāng-i nāy* (the outcry of the reed) has been used in reference to both the mystic Sound itself and also to the pain of separation experienced by the soul. The evocative sound of the reed pipe expresses the inner, unuttered cry of the soul who is separated from her divine Beloved, her Source and Origin. Rūmī says that the soul's longing blows through the reed not as wind, but as fire:

This outcry of the reed (*bāng-i nāy*) is fire, not wind:  
anyone without this fire, may he be naught!

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:9; cf. MJR2 p.5*

Using the common Sufi metaphors of wine and drinking, Ḥāfiẓ speaks of the inner meeting with the divine Beloved, portraying the *bāng-i nāy* as the Beloved's "message":

Who is that one who has the courage  
to make a pact of loyalty with me?  
Who, regarding a sinful one like me,  
can perform one such good deed?

First, to the sound of the reed pipe (*bāng-i nāy*)  
and the flute (*nay*) comes his message.  
Then, with a cup of wine,  
he shows his loyalty to me.

That heart ravisher, before whom my soul withered,  
by whom the desire of my heart opened not:  
Of him, one cannot be devoid of hope:  
perhaps he may act from lovingkindness.  
*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.48, DHM (125:1–3) p.141, DIH pp.115–16;*  
*cf. DHWC (242:1–3) p.437*

See also: **nāy**, **rabāb**.

**bells of the Holy Spirit** Symbolically, the inner Sound; appears in the medieval *Zohar* to describe the experience of spiritual joy given to several rabbis by a spiritually advanced child:

Rabbi Eleazar said: "There is so much joy in my heart because of this child. How many new interpretations of *Torah* will be spoken at this

table. That is why I said before that I knew that there were clappers of the bells of the Holy Spirit within him.”

*Zohar 3:188b, WZ1 p.207*

Here, as in other places in the *Zohar*, the “child” is a metaphor for the spiritual Master in his purity and innocence.

See also: **ghaṇṭā**, **Youth** (►2).

**bherī** (S/H) An ancient form of crude Indian wind instrument made of thin pieces of brass or copper sheet, producing a loud and harsh sound; once used on Hindu ceremonial occasions such as religious festivals, marriages, war and so on; no longer used in modern times. The sound of the *bherī* is mentioned in the *Haṃsa Upanishad* and also by the mystic Charaṇḍās as one of the initial sounds heard as the soul begins the inner ascent.

See also: **Nāda** (3.1), **tūrya**.

**bīn** (H/Pu) A simple pipe or wind instrument traditionally made and used by the snake charmers of India, emitting a soft and soothing tone; also called a *pūṅṭī*.

About eighteen inches long, the *bīn* is made from a curved gourd, with an opening at the narrow end. Two thin, straight, bamboo pieces with holes like a normal flute are attached centrally below the gourd, opening into it, but pointing forwards. ‘Reeds’ made from horsehair are fixed with wax into these two pipes. The instrument is blown from the narrow opening into the gourd and different notes are selected by the fingering of the holes in the bamboo pipes.

It is remarkable how many different species of snake are fascinated or charmed by this music. Mahārāj Sāwan Singh writes of this attraction of the mind for music, on both man and other creatures:

There is a power of attraction even in the outer melody, and concentration and refinement of one’s feelings may be secured by listening to it. There are two powerful forces which attract living beings: beauty and melody. Of the two, melody has the greater power of attraction and influences the mind to a greater extent.... The influence of music on serpents and birds is a matter of common experience. The snake charmer, for example, plays on his flute and the serpent, forgetting for a moment its venomous nature, submits tamely to the piper. The influence of melody on man is far greater. Music certainly

has a powerful effect on the mind, but it cannot take us into the higher spiritual worlds.

*Mahārāj Sāwan Singh, Philosophy of the Masters 5, PM5 p.1*

Bearing in mind this attraction, some mystics have said that just as a snake is charmed by the sound of the snake charmer's pipe, so too is the mind 'charmed' or controlled by means of the divine music of the Name given by a Master.<sup>1</sup> The sound of the *bīn* has not been likened to the music heard in any particular region. It has simply been used as an analogy for control of the mind or of the influence of music on the mind.

The *bīn* should not be confused with the stringed, classical instrument, the *vīṇā* or *bīṇā* whose sound is said to be reminiscent of the music heard in eternity. Confusingly, in northern India the *vīṇā* or *bīṇā* has often been called the *bīn*, especially in the past. In fact, in Abū al-Faḥl's sixteenth-century *Ā'in-i Akbarī*, the *bīn* is described as a stringed instrument, similar to the sitar. Even now, *vīṇā* players are traditionally known as *bīnkārs* (*bīn* players).

See also: *vīṇā*.

1. e.g. Guru Amardās, *Ādi Granth* 510; Guru Nānak, *Ādi Granth* 1009; Guru Arjun, *Ādi Granth* 1361.

**bīṇā** (H/Pu), **bīṇā** (Pu) See *vīṇā*.

**chang** (P) *Lit.* lyre; also, harp, but referring to a Middle Eastern instrument, very similar to the lyre, rather than the harp as it is known in modern times; mystically, one of many instruments used in reference to the inner, divine Music; often mentioned by Ḥāfiẓ, along with other musical instruments, in his odes in praise of divine love, the *Murshid* (Master) and the divine Music.

Writing in his characteristically symbolic manner, he says, now that the Master ("the Rose") has come to this world ("this green field") from the ocean of the Divine ("Nonexistence"), and the humble seeker ("the violet") is at his Master's feet, let him enjoy divine ecstasy in morning meditation ("a cup of morning wine"), while listening to the inner music of "the tambourine and the lyre (*chang*)", and communing with the divine inner Beloved ("the Mistress", to "kiss the face of the Cupbearer"). For, he says, this is the "rose season", and the opportunity is brief:

Now that from Nonexistence to existence,  
the Rose has come to this green field,  
and, at its foot, the violet has laid its head in homage –

Drink a cup of morning wine  
to the sound of the tambourine (*daff*) and the lyre (*chang*):  
Kiss the face of the Cupbearer (*Sāqī*)  
to the melody (*naghmah*) of the reed (*nay*) and the lute (*ūd*).  
In the rose season, sit not without wine,  
and the Mistress, and the lyre (*chang*):  
For, like fleeting time,  
its permanency is but a week.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA pp.102–3, DHM (233:1–2, 8) p.236,  
DIH p.191; cf. DHWC (121:1–3) p.252*

In another, he says that the “Rose” – the Beloved – “has departed”. Therefore, he counsels, waste no time, but seek the face of the “Beloved” in daily morning meditation (“the morning rendezvous”), listening to the divine “sound of the harp and the lyre (*chang*)”:

O companions! The Rose has departed!  
Why sit heedless  
without the sound (*bāng*) of the harp (*rūd*)  
and the lyre (*chang*) –  
Without the Beloved and the cup of wine?  
You know so well how joyful is the *Sāqī*’s cheek,  
reflected in the wine cup at the morning rendezvous.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHM (493:5–6) p.444, DIH p.367–68; cf. DHWC (491:5–6) p.810*

Likewise, revisiting the same theme, he speaks again of the inner Music, the divine Friend and nightly meditation:

Dear friends, remember the Friend of the night!  
Remember the charge of dedicated devotion.  
At the time of intoxication, when lovers weep in longing,  
call to mind the sound (*ṣawt*) of the melody (*naghmah*)  
of the lyre (*chang*) and of cymbal (*chaghānah*)....  
When the reflection of wine in the *Sāqī*’s face  
shows resplendent –  
Remember the lovers with song and melody.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.113, DHM (242:1, 3–4) p.243,  
DIH p.202; cf. DHWC (205:1–2, 4) p.381*

In a similar vein, an unattributed Sufi also writes:

All night enamoured with you,  
you see me drunk and ruined;

Your call of love comes to me  
 from the lyre (*chang*) and the rebec (*rubāb*).  
*Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq*, in *TAT* p.191, in *FNII* p.127, in *SSEI* p.168

See also: **harp and lyre**.

**chiñī, chiñchiñī** (S), **chihn, chihn chihn** (H) Onomatopoeic words used to convey a rustling or vaguely ringing kind of a sound or the call of a bird as in 'ding-dong' or 'tweet, tweet'. In the *Haṃsa Upanishad*, the word is used to describe one of the ten sounds heard in the astral realm.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **Nāda** (3.1).

1. *Haṃsa Upanishad* 16.

**Cosmic Music** See **Music (Cosmic)**.

**daff, duff** (A/P), **daph, daphalā, daphālī** (H) Forms of simple tambourine, used in rural India for folk music, dance and festive occasions, consisting of a round open frame of any inexpensive wood, from a few inches up to three feet in diameter and six inches deep, with a skin stretched over one side, held in tension by means of a network of thin leather thongs attached to the edges of the skin, and pulled tightly across the reverse side of the drum. The instrument is gripped in the left hand, held against the body of the player, and played with the fore and middle fingers of the right hand. The left hand also holds a thin, flat piece of bamboo which is allowed to hang down vertically over the face of the drum and is beaten at various rhythmic intervals, providing a deeper kind of percussive sound. The outer rim may also be struck at intervals with a metal ring. The *daphalā* is smaller than the *daph*, while the *daphālī*, the smallest variant of this instrument, can measure only about three to six inches in diameter and two inches deep.

Mystics always speak to the common man and draw their similes from everyday life. The mystic Keshavdās writes:

On the shore of *tribeṇī* can be heard  
 the sounds of *mṛidang* (drum),  
*jhāñjh* (cymbals) and *daph*.

*Keshavdās, Amīghūnt 4:1, KDA p.3*



Unlike its Indian equivalent, the Middle Eastern *daff* is several times larger than the conventional Western tambourine, and may or may not have bells or other appendages attached. It has a deep resonance like a drum, and is traditionally employed by the *Qādirīyah* and *Rifāʿī* Sufis during a *samāʿ*, a gathering for devotional music, dance and chanting.

The divine creative power has been described by mystics as beautiful music, and the music of the inner realms has been likened to different musical instruments. While some Sufis may mention the *daff* in reference to the outward ritual of *samāʿ* gatherings, mystics use the *daff* poetically to refer to the Sound heard within. It can hardly be imagined, for example, that the *daff* which Rūmī describes as the Sound which brings the creation from “Nonbeing into being” is a mere musical instrument:

O minstrel of the soul, now that the *daff* has come to hand,  
strike up an old tune,  
for that (spiritually) intoxicated Beloved has come....  
Out of love for that Sun,  
all the atoms of the world are dancing:  
From Nonbeing into being have they come.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz* 686:7130, 7132, KSD2 p.685; cf. SSE1 p.170

Likewise, it is to no outer sound that Ḥāfiẓ refers when he says that while seated in the solitude of meditation, the divine Music is present “all around” him:

What a unique state!  
Here I am sitting in seclusion like an ascetic,  
and all around me the Magian Boy (the Master)  
is playing the *chang* (lyre) and *daff*.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA* p.157, *DHM* (343:5) p.325,  
*DIH* p.271; cf. *DHWC* (349:6) p.600

The Magian Boy is the Master or *Murshid* who brings the seeker into contact with the divine Sound.

See also: **tambourine**.

**devadundubhi** (S/H) *Lit.* divine (*deva*) drum (*dundubhi*); a Jain term referring to the inner Sound as a thunderous sound, a *dhundubhi* being a kind of large kettledrum.

See also: **mṛidanga**.

**divine Music** The music of the Word, the Voice of God or creative Power. Mystics have often likened the Sound heard in the inner heavens to the sounds of the musical instruments of this world, the particular instruments they mention depending on their culture. Indian mystics have spoken of the bell, the conch, the *sārangī*, the *kingrī*, the flute and the *vīṇā*. Jewish, early Christian and Manichaean texts mention the tambourine, the trumpet, the lyre, the lute, the flute and the harp. And in all cultures, listening to the divine Music is commonly described as ‘singing the praises of the Lord’ or ‘singing songs to Him’. In some religious traditions, outer chanting and singing was originally designed to bring the soul into contact with the inner Music, just as Hindus may chant “*Om, Om, Om,*” *Om* being a name for the divine Sound used in the *Upanishads*. But although music is an integral part of human culture, played to evoke a variety of moods on many different occasions, its use in worship often arises from a misunderstanding of the true nature of the divine Music.

However majestic, beautiful, captivating and mentally uplifting the best music of this world may be, it is nothing compared to the bliss, enchantment and life-bestowing qualities of the divine Music. Moreover, the mind cannot listen continuously to the music of this world. At most, a person can enjoy music for only a few hours at a time. After a while, even the most beautiful passages lose their poignancy and fail to hold the mind as they once did. Moreover, the music of this world lasts only for a short period. The divine Music, on the other hand, never fails to captivate, enchant and spiritually enrich. It also plays unceasingly, for it is the vibration and movement which sustains everything. It is the Life Force, new every moment, sparkling and vibrant like the freshness of a new dawn.

In churches, temples and man-made religious buildings, the commonest aspects of ritual and liturgy are the lighting of candles and the playing and singing of religious music. Found in nearly every religion of the world, they symbolize the true light and Sound that exists within every human being. That is the inner sanctuary, the real temple or holy place, the true altar where the Divine is to be worshipped.

Many examples can be given from the mystic literature of the ancient Middle East in which the playing or singing of music actually refers to the inner listening of the soul to the divine Melody. In one of the biblical psalms, the psalmist is explicit. He speaks of the “music of the zither and lyre” and the “rippling of the harp” in the same context as the “Name” and the exhortation “to proclaim Your love at daybreak” and “all through the night”. Musicians have always enjoyed all-night music sessions, but the juxtaposition of these symbols makes it clear – especially from the content of the rest of the psalm – that the meaning here is that of nightly or early morning meditation, when the devotee listens to the inner music of the mystic “Name” of God:

It is good to give thanks to *Yahweh*,  
 to play in honour of Your Name most high,  
 to proclaim Your love at daybreak,  
 and Your faithfulness all through the night,  
 to the music of the zither and lyre,  
 to the rippling of the harp.

*Psalm 92:1–3, JB*

The meaning is even clearer in a passage from *Revelations* where the writer says:

And I heard a Voice from heaven,  
 as the Voice of many waters,  
 and as the Voice of a great thunder:  
 And I heard the Voice of harpers,  
 harping with their harps.

*Book of Revelation 14:2, KJV*

In the Christian gospels, the divine Sound is generally described as God's Word or Voice, particularly in John's gospel. In keeping with apocalyptic beliefs of the period, the Day of Judgment is also said to be heralded by the sound of a trumpet. This cannot be meant literally, however, and possibly stems from a misunderstanding of the nature of the divine Music. There is, for instance, a saying attributed to Jesus in Matthew:

And He (God) shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet,  
 and they shall gather together his elect (the chosen ones) from the four  
 winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

*Matthew 24:31, KJV*

Other early Christian texts also speak of the heavenly Music. The writer of the *Odes of Solomon* makes many allusions to the sound of the Word and to the inner Music:

As the hand moves over the harp,  
 and the strings speak –  
 So speaks the Spirit of the Lord in my members,  
 and I speak by His love.

*Odes of Solomon 6:1–2*

In the *Acts of John*, one of the characters – a young man who in an allegorical tale has just been raised from the dead – admonishes his hearers, telling them that they have exchanged “places ... full of the sounds of musical

instruments” for “places of darkness”. These “places” are equated with the “kingdom that was prepared for you”, while the “places of darkness” are either hell or possibly this world where the incident takes place:

For now, in a little time, you have lost  
 the kingdom that was prepared for you,  
 and the dwelling places built of shining stones,  
 full of joy, of feasting and delights,  
 full of everlasting life and eternal light:  
 And have got for yourselves places of darkness,  
 full of dragons, of roaring flames,  
 of torments, and punishments unsurpassable,  
 of pains and anguish, fear and horrible trembling.

You have lost the places full of unfading flowers, shining,  
 full of the sounds of musical instruments (*lit.* organs);  
 And have received, on the other hand, places  
 wherein roaring and howling and mourning  
 cease not, day nor night.

*Acts of John XVII; cf. ANT p.261*

The gnostic writers also speak of this Music, as in the *Second Apocalypse of James* which specifically mentions the “sound of my Word” and the trumpets, flutes and harps of “this (heavenly) house”. The “Lord has taken you captive from the Lord” means that it is the Lord who has sent souls into this creation and prevented them from hearing the Sound, and it is the Lord who will bring them out again:

Play your trumpets, your flutes  
 and your harps of this (heavenly) house.  
 The Lord has taken you captive from the Lord,  
 having closed your ears,  
 that they may not hear the sound of my Word.  
 Yet you will be able to pay heed in your hearts....  
 (For) behold, I gave you your (heavenly) house ...  
 in which He promised to give you an inheritance.

*Second Apocalypse of James 60, NHS11 pp.140–41*

Manichaean writings also contain many such references, clearly indicating the importance given by Mānī to the divine Music. In one of the Coptic psalms, the Call – the Voice of God or creative Power – speaks of its mission in this world, to “tell the news” of the “Father of the Lights” to the “maidens” – the pure souls or initiates who are to return to Him. For this

purpose, “music” is being played, the “harp players” are “gathered”, and so on – all these being allusions to the inner music:

And the Call answered: ...

“I came forth, the Father being gathered:

the *aeons* (the heavenly realms) being gathered unto the Father.

Lo, this is the news....

“I was sent, the *aeons* of the *aeons*

playing music to the Father of the Lights,

that I might tell the news.

I was sent, the harp players being gathered,

singing unto the Father,

that I might tell the news....

“I was sent, the Father rejoicing,

the maidens surrounding Him.

Lo, this is the news.

I was sent, the Father being gathered,

the joyful ones singing to Him.

Lo, this is the news.

“I was sent, the harps being in their hands,

they playing to the Father of the Lights.

Lo, this is the news.

I was sent, the pipes sounding in the mooring places.

Lo, this is the news.”

*Psalms of Heracleidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB pp.199–200*

The “mooring places” are an allusion to the metaphor of the Saviour as the Helmsman who guides his chosen souls to their eternal home on ships of light. The “mooring places” are the staging posts or the various levels in the hierarchy of creation, from each of which a different sound emanates, each drawing the soul upwards and onwards. Hence, the psalmist writes of the “pipes sounding in the mooring places”.

In another psalm, it is the sound of the trumpet which calls the soul up out of the body into the inner heavens:

Save me, O blessed Christ,

Saviour of holy souls.

I will pass up into the heavens,

and leave this body upon the earth.

The trumpet sounds, I hear,  
 they are calling me up to the immortals.  
 I will cast away my body upon the earth  
 from which it was assembled.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXI; cf. MPB p.75*

In another, the Music is likened to that of the harp and the lute:

The victorious ones (liberated souls)  
 that are laden with garlands,  
 paying homage to their King,  
 their harps in their hands,  
 their lutes with them;  
 Their harps in their hands,  
 singing unto the hidden Father;  
 Their lutes are with them  
 as they make music unto Him.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.133*

And describing the soul as the “little one” who “makes music by night” – in her nightly meditation – the poet writes enchantingly:

The little one makes music by night,  
 Matter answered him with a word:  
 “O little one that makes music ...  
 this is no art of this world.”

He (the little one) said,  
 “I indeed am in this world,  
 but I shall not dwell in it from henceforth.  
 I have tried the world and known it,  
 that there is not (even) a tittle of life in it.”

*Psalms of Thomas XVII, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.223*

Matter ‘says’ that this kind of mystic ‘music making’ is “no art of this world”. The soul replies that though she is presently in this world, she will soon be leaving it forever. For she has “tried the world” – has observed and experienced it completely – and noted that it has no true “life in it”, “not (even) a tittle”. It is all error, illusion or deception.

Similarly, it is said in another psalm – where the “*Nous* of Light” is a term for the creative Power – that the “maidens”, the pure ones, the devotees who hear the Sound in the realms “on high”, make music to the Lord. They are “sweet and pleasant singers, lamps ... that are full of hymns”:

The assembly, the progeny of [the *Nous* of Light sing to you;  
 Maidens and virgins] on high make music to you....  
 O virtuous assembly of the righteous,  
     sweet and pleasant singers,  
     lamps that are gathered,  
     that are full of hymns –  
 Light them quickly in your joy!

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXXVIII; cf. MEM p.181, MPB p.99*

Among the Christian mystics, too, there are a number of references to experiences of this divine Music. St Augustine (354–430) speaks of it in a commentary on psalm forty-one, telling the story of this psalm as if he were describing the experience of the psalmist as he makes his way to God. This Music, he says, is heard with the inner ears, the “ears of the heart”:

It was going up to the tabernacle (of God within) that he (the psalmist) arrived at the house of God.... By following the leadings of a certain delight, an inward mysterious and hidden pleasure, as if from the house of God there sounded sweetly some instrument; and while he was walking in the tabernacle, hearing a certain inward sound of spiritual Music, led on by its sweetness and following the guidance of the Sound, abstracting his attention from all noise of flesh and blood, he made his way on, even to the house of God....

In the house of God there is a never ending festival.... The angelic choir makes an eternal holiday: the presence of God’s face, joy that never fails.... From that everlasting, perpetual festivity, there sounds on the ears of the heart a certain strain, melodious and sweet, provided only the world does not drown out the sounds....

But seeing that “the corruptible body presses down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weighs down the mind that muses on many things,”<sup>1</sup> even if we have in some way dispersed the clouds by walking as longing leads us on, and for a brief while have come within reach of that Sound, so that by an effort we may catch something from that house of God, yet through the burden, so to speak, of our infirmity, we sink back to our usual level and relapse to our ordinary state.... For (he that was) ... led on by delight of that inward, spiritual Sound to feel contempt for outward things and be ravished by things interior is but mortal man still, is still groaning here, still bearing about the frailty of the flesh, still in peril in the midst of the evils of this world.

*St Augustine, on Psalm 41:4; cf. AP2 pp.188–90, WM pp.29–30*

Augustine, who would almost certainly have known about the inner Sound through an earlier, nine-year association with the Manichaeans, describes

its captivating quality as if he himself had experienced it. He also notes how the “corruptible body presses down the soul”, how readily “all noise of flesh and blood” and the distractions of the world can “drown out the sounds”, and how easy it is, even for one who has made some inner progress – who has been “ravished by things interior” – to be pulled down again into the body.

Later Christian mystics also spoke of this same sweet, enrapturing divine Melody. The German mystic, Henry Suso (c.1295–1366), who was influenced by his association with Meister Eckhart (c.1260–1327), speaks of it in his autobiography, *The Life of the Servant*. He describes in the third person how he would take time for himself in the chapel during the early morning, and how his devotions were often accompanied by

a sweet melody in his soul. Once at this time, while he sat thus at rest, he heard within himself a gracious melody by which his heart was greatly moved.

*Henry Suso, Life of the Servant 6, LS p.10; cf. LBHS pp.19–20, MS p.277*

The English mystic and hermit, Richard Rolle (c.1300–1349) of north Yorkshire, while still a young man, similarly describes his

receiving of this heavenly and ghostly Sound, the which belongs to the songs of everlasting praise and the sweetness of unseen melody; because it may not be known or heard but of him that receives it, whom it behoves to be clean and departed from the earth.

*Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 1:15, FL p.92*

Like St Augustine, he too observes that in order to hear this Sound, a person must have no thought of the world in his mind, but must be “clean and departed from the earth”. He then continues:

Whiles also I took heed praying to heaven with my whole desire, suddenly, I wot not in what manner, I felt in me the noise of song, and received the most liking heavenly melody which dwelt with me in my mind.... And henceforth, for plenteousness of inward sweetness, I burst out singing what before I said, but forsooth, privily, because alone before my Maker. I was not known by them that saw me as, peradventure, if they had known me (what I was experiencing), they would have honoured me above measure, and so I should have lost part of the most fair flower and should have fallen into desolation.

In the meanwhile, wonder caught me that I should be taken up to so great mirth whiles I was in exile (in this world); and because God gave gifts to me that I knew not to ask, nor trowed I that any man, not the holiest, could have received any such thing in this life.

*Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 1:15, FL p.92*



Luis de León (1527–1591), a Spanish monk of the Augustinian order, and a brilliant professor of theology at the University of Salamanca, speaks of the same Music. Expressing himself poetically, he writes of his experience of “a new Music” in the spiritual realms, the “fields of air”:

And at that Sound divine, my soul –  
 that in forgetfulness hath lain –  
 with a new light doth shine.  
 And unto memory plain,  
 of its first splendid origin, attain.  
 Up through the fields of air it wings,  
 till in the highest sphere it dwells.  
 And a new Music there, it hears,  
 Music that wells undying,  
 and all other kinds excels.

*Luis de León, A Francisco de Salinas, SSM1 p.264*

Likewise, Mechthild of Magdeburg (c.1210–1297), a German nun and probably abbess of the Dominican Convent of St Agnes, writes:

When my Lord comes,  
 I am beside myself.  
 For there cometh with Him such sweet melody  
 that all carnal desire dieth within me:  
 And His sweet Music puts far from me  
 all sorrow of heart.

*Mechthild of Magdeburg, Flowing Light of the Godhead 2:3, RMM pp.29–30*

These passages all speak of the same experience of inner Music, and though it is true that they do not necessarily equate it with the Word of God, this may be because such experiences are only the very beginning of what is attainable. As the soul advances further, it perceives for itself that the real source of sound, light and, indeed, the entire creation is the divine music of the Word.

See also: **Song**.

1. *Wisdom of Solomon* 9:15.

**divine Music (Taoism)** (C. *T’iēn Yüèh*, Music of Heaven) Mystics of many periods and cultures have pointed out that a celestial Music or divine Sound is heard when the mind is deeply concentrated and learns to listen within. Several Taoist writings contain references to a celestial Music which is heard

when a soul is transported to a heavenly state, either as the result of cultivated inner stillness or through sudden transport by an Immortal (*Hsiên*) or sage.

This inner Sound has been referred to as *hsī Yīn* (rarefied Tone), *hsī Shén* (rarefied Sound), *Shén yùn* (spiritual Resonance or Vibration), *T'ien Yüeh* (Music of Heaven, divine Music), and *T'ien Lài* (Pipings of Heaven). It is understood as a rarefied, subtle, lofty or transcendent sound, not perceivable by the physical ears. *Tào*, the creative Power, has also been associated with this divine, soundless or constant Sound. As Huái Nán Tzu writes:

The Formless is the great ancestor of things,  
and the Soundless is the great progenitor of the audible.

*Huái Nán Tzu 1, YD p.104*

Ssū-má Ch'ien, the Hàn dynasty grand historian of the second century BCE, claimed in his *Shih Chì* (*Record of History*) that musical tones have their origin within the human mind and heart. He is implying that there are inaudible tones perceived within when a person's consciousness becomes more subtle. It is from these rarefied sounds, he said, that external music has its roots. Moreover, scattered throughout Chinese literature are references to the inaudible sound, the unplucked string or even a stringless *ch'in* (a traditional stringed Chinese musical instrument). These reveal true insight into the dual nature of sound – both as an acoustic phenomenon heard by the physical ear, and as a spiritual awareness or consciousness heard only with the inner ear, with its origins in subtle realms.

Celestial sounds are described with a variety of characteristics. A fourth-century CE biography of a *Hsiên* (an Immortal, a sage), for instance, describes a “tinkling sound” in an experience related after he had been escorted to heaven:

In the gardens grew trees bearing gems and jade.... Dragons and tigers gambolled in our midst, and a tinkling sound was audible, like that of bronze ornaments hanging round a bell, the origin of which I could not discover.

*Taoist Anecdote, GCI p.33*

The Taoist sage Chuāng Tzu (c.369–286 BCE) describes the “Piping of Heaven (*T'ien Lài*)” in a story concerning the sage, Tzù Ch'ì, who has perfected the process of *tsò wàng* (sitting in forgetfulness) – of “losing himself” – and is questioned by an associate, Yén Ch'êng Tzŭ Yü:

Tzù Ch'ì of South Wall sat leaning on his armrest, staring up at the sky and breathing – vacant and far away, as though he'd lost his companion. Yén Ch'êng Tzŭ Yü, who was standing by his side in

attendance, said, “What is this? Can you really make the body like a withered tree and the mind like dead ashes? The man leaning on the armrest now is not the one who leaned on it before!”

Tzù Ch’ì said, “You do well to ask the question, Yén. Now I have lost myself. Do you understand that? You hear the piping of men, but you haven’t heard the piping of Earth. Or if you’ve heard the piping of Earth, you haven’t heard the piping of Heaven!”

*Chuāng Tzu 2, CTW p.36*

Prompted by Yén Ch’éng Tzǔ Yü, Tzù Ch’ì then goes on to liken the “piping of Earth (*Tì lài*)” to different sounds that a fierce wind makes as it passes over different kinds of objects:

Tzǔ Yü said, “May I venture to ask what this means?”

Tzù Ch’ì said, “The Great Clod (the eternal Source) belches out breath and its name is wind. So long as it doesn’t come forth, nothing happens. But when it does, then ten thousand hollows begin crying wildly. Can’t you hear them, long drawn out? In the mountain forests that lash and sway, there are huge trees a hundred spans around with hollows and openings like noses, like mouths, like ears, like jugs, like cups, like mortars, like rifts, like ruts. They roar like waves, whistle like arrows, screech, grasp, cry, wail, moan and howl: those in the lead calling out ‘yeee!’; those behind calling out ‘yuuu!’ In a gentle breeze, they answer faintly, but in a full gale the chorus is gigantic. And when the fierce wind has passed on, then all the hollows are empty again. Have you never seen the tossing and trembling that goes on?”

Tzǔ Yü said, “By the piping of Earth, then, you mean simply (the sound of) these hollows, and by the piping of man (the sound of) flutes and whistles. But may I ask about the piping of Heaven?”

Tzù Ch’ì said, “Blowing on the ten thousand things in a different way, so that each can be itself – all take what they want for themselves, but who does the sounding?”

*Chuāng Tzu 2, CTW pp.36–37*

The “ten thousand hollows” which “begin crying wildly” when the “Great Clod” – the eternal Source – breathes out “wind”, symbolize the coming into being of the multiplicity of creation – of the “ten thousand things”. The “piping of Earth” represents these sounds, the origin of which is *T’iēn Lài*, the “Piping of Heaven”. Tzù Ch’ì describes the “piping of Heaven” as the invisible force which gives each created thing its nature. But he also inquires: “Who does the sounding?” He is indicating that the creative Sound

itself emanates from a supreme Source or Cause, bringing the marvellous and amazing symphony of creation into existence.

Inner sounds and higher regions are both described in a story related by Lièh Tzu, an early Taoist philosopher of the fourth- or fifth-century BCE. A certain King Mù was the devotee of a great wizard who could perform unbelievable feats of magic. He could pierce metal and stone, overturn mountains, fly through the air, alter the shapes of things and even change the minds of men. Because of these powers, the king was filled with a deep sense of reverence and wonder for the wizard. He served him with great devotion, lodging him in his own palace, and giving him the best of everything. The wizard, however, was never satisfied, no matter what the king gave him. Even when the king had an entirely new palace built to please the wizard, sparing no expense, the wizard was still discontented.

There is a reason: the wizard already possesses a fabulous palace of his own in the heavens to which he can travel at will, with which nothing on earth can ever compare. By his rejection of the king's gifts, the magician has been trying to lead the king to an understanding of this higher treasure. All this becomes clear when, one day, the wizard invites the king to accompany him on a heavenly excursion, first to the "magician's palace" and then to an even higher heaven:

He soared upwards, with King Mù clinging to his sleeve, and did not stop until they were in the middle sky. There they came to the magician's palace. It was built of gold and silver, and strung with pearls and jades; it stood out above the clouds and the rain, and one could not tell what supported it underneath. In the distance it looked like a congealed cloud. All that the eye observed and the ear listened to, the nose inhaled and the tongue tasted, were things unknown in the world of men. The king really believed that he was enjoying 'the mighty music of the innermost heaven', in the Pure City of the Purple Star, the palaces where God dwells. When he looked down, his own palaces and arbours were like rows of clods and heaps of brushwood.

When it seemed to the king that he had lived there twenty or thirty years without thinking of his own country, the magician again invited him to accompany him on an excursion. They came to a place where they could not see the sun and moon above them, nor the rivers and seas below them. Lights and shadows glared, till the king's eyes were dazzled, and he could not look; noises echoed towards them, till the king's ears hummed and he could not listen. Every member and organ loosened in terror, his thoughts ran riot and his spirits waned; and he asked the magician to let him go back. The magician gave him a push, and the king seemed to meteor through space.

When he awoke, he was sitting as before in his own palace, and his own attendants waited at his side. He looked in front of him: the wine had not yet cooled, the meats had not yet gone dry. When the king asked where he had been, his courtiers answered: "Your majesty has only been sitting here, absorbed in something."

*Lièh Tzu 3, BLT pp.62–63*

Some idea of how external music can be inspired by an inner, transcendent music is found in a story related by Chuāng Tzu. The Yellow Emperor (a revered mythical figure in Chinese history and philosophy) plays a piece of music, and one of his subjects then describes the feelings that the music evoked in him:

Pěi Mén Ch'éng said to the Yellow Emperor, "When your Majesty played the *hàn ch'ih* in the wilds of T'ung T'ing, the first time I heard it, I was afraid; the second time I was amazed; and the last time I was confused, speechless, overwhelmed."

"You are not far from the truth," replied the Yellow Emperor. "I played as a man, drawing inspiration from God. The execution was punctilious, the expression sublime.

"Perfect music first shapes itself (played the first time) according to a human standard; then it follows the lines of the divine; then it proceeds in harmony with the five virtues; then it passes into spontaneity. The four seasons are then blended, and all creation is brought into accord. As the seasons come forth in turn, so are all things produced. Now fullness, now decay, now soft and loud in turn, now clear, now muffled, the harmony of *yīn* and *yáng*. Like a flash was the sound which roused you as the insect world is roused, followed by a thundering peal, without end and without beginning, now dying, now living, now sinking, now rising, on and on without a moment's break. And so you were afraid.

"When I played again (the second time), it was the harmony of the *yīn* and *yáng*, lighted by the glory of the sun and moon; now broken, now prolonged, now gentle, now severe, in one unbroken volume of sound. Filling valley and gorge, stopping the ears and dominating the senses, adapting itself to the capacity of things – the sound whirled around on all sides, with shrill note and clear. The spirits of darkness kept to their domain. Sun, moon and stars, pursued their appointed course. When the melody was exhausted I stopped; if the melody did not stop, I went on. You would have sympathized, but you could not understand. You would have looked, but you could not see. You would have pursued, but you could not overtake. You stood dazed in

the middle of the wilderness, leaning against a tree and crooning, your eye conscious of exhausted vision, your strength failing for the pursuit, and so unable to overtake me. Your frame was but an empty shell. You were completely at a loss, and so you were amazed.

“Then I played (the third time) in sounds which produce no amazement, the melodious law of spontaneity, springing forth like nature’s countless buds, in manifold but formless joy, as though poured forth to the dregs, in deep but soundless bass. Beginning nowhere, the melody rested in void; some would say dead, others alive, others real, others ornamental, as it scattered itself on all sides in never to be anticipated chords.

“The wondering world inquires of the sage. He is in relation with its variations (referring to the above music), and follows the same eternal law.

“When no machinery is set in motion, and yet the instrumentation is complete, this is the Music of God. The mind awakes to its enjoyment waiting to be called. Accordingly, Yü Piāo (a legendary prehistoric ruler of China) praised it, saying, ‘Listening, you cannot hear its sound; gazing, you cannot see its form. It fills Heaven and Earth. It embraces the six cardinal points.’ Now you desired to listen to it, but you were not able to grasp its existence. And so you were confused.

“My music first induced fear; and as a consequence respect. It then added amazement, by which you were isolated (from consciousness of your surroundings). And lastly confusion; for confusion means absence of sense, and absence of sense means *Tào*, and *Tào* means absorption therein.”

*Chuāng Tzu 14, CTT pp.143–44*

In many ways, the story seems to be a parable describing the journey of the soul as it travels with a sage, guided by the transcendent Sound, further and further into subtle regions of consciousness. The soul struggles to keep up with the sage, and in the end is unable to comprehend the profundity and vastness of the experience. The story also expresses the idea that the music is a great creative Power, the characteristic of sound being that which gives life and form to all things: “Like a flash was the sound which roused you as the insect world is roused, followed by a thundering peal.”

At the end, “confusion” is explained as the absence of (rational) sense, an overwhelming state of flux or void, in which *Tào* may be realized by losing the ego-self, and by becoming totally absorbed into the Sound.

See also: **T’iēn Lài, Tào** (2.2).

**divine Song See Song.**

**flute** An ancient wind instrument, of which there are many variants, commonly used by mystics of all lands and ages in reference to the divine Music. The prophet Isaiah, for example, is probably referring to the inner Music when he writes:

You shall have a song,  
as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept;  
And gladness of heart  
as when one goes with a flute (*ḥalil*)  
to come to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the rock of Israel.

*Isaiah 30:29, JCL*

Jewish holy days start with their consecration in the evening. They are times of both devout solemnity and joy. Music is also played. Isaiah seems to be likening nightly devotion or meditation to a “holy solemnity” when the soul dances with joy to the sound of the inner Music.

Likewise, in a Persian Manichaean text, the Saviours or “wise Teachers” are referred to as the “flute players (who play) to the rhythm of the First Call” – the “First Call” or Primal Call, “*Vahman*” and “Wisdom” all being names for the creative Power:

The wise Teachers who teach  
and reveal the mysteries of Wisdom –  
The flute players of ... *Vahman* [who play]  
to the rhythm of the First Call.  
*Manichaean Hymns, MM2 p.323ff., RMP cm; cf. GSR p.92:1.5*

Several centuries later, the great Persian and Sufi mystic, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, held the matter to be of such importance that he began his epic poem, the *Mašnavī*, with the reed-flute playing a song of longing in separation from its source. He is speaking of the soul’s separation from its divine Source:

Listen to the reed how it tells a tale,  
complaining of separation –  
Saying, “Ever since I was parted from the reed bed,  
my lament has caused man and woman to moan.”  
*Rūmī, Mašnavī Proem I:1–2; cf. MJR2 p.5*

See also: **baṃsarī**, **muralī**, **nāy**.

**ghaṇṭā** (S/H) *Lit.* bell, gong, chime; one of the preliminary sounds, heard as the tinkling of small bells, as the soul begins to go within, deepening to that of

a large bell or gong as the soul enters *sahans dal kanwal* (thousand-petalled lotus), the central powerhouse of the astral realm. According to the *Haṃsa Upanishad*, one of the preliminary sounds heard within is like the tinkling of small bells:

The third is the sound (*nāda*) of a bell (*ghaṇṭā*).

*Haṃsa Upanishad* 16; cf. *TMU* pp.163, 299

Of the higher bell sound, Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh writes that it is heard in *sahans dal kanwal*, the thousand-petalled lotus at the heart of the astral realm. *Bank nāl* is the ‘passage’ leading from there to the realm above, the causal region or *trikuṭī*:

Musical instruments are played in the heavens....

My soul hears the sound of the bell (*ghaṇṭā*),  
and is drawn to that of the conch.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry* 6:14.9, 13, *SBP* p.61

And:

At *sahans dal kanwal*, the bell (*ghaṇṭā*) peals;

At *bank nāl*, there is the sound of the conch.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry* 30:25.4, *SBP* p.253

See also: **bells of the Holy Spirit, Nāda** (3.1).

**Hari Kīrtan** (H/Pu), **Hari Kīrat** (Pu) *Lit.* Music (*Kīrtan*) of God (*Hari*); the divine Music, the divine Melody; the creative Power. The term is also used in the external sense of devotional songs or music in praise of or love for God; hence, it also means God’s praise. When mystics speak of singing the praises of the Lord or worshipping His Name, however, the expression is generally being used as a metaphor for listening to the sweet and life-giving music of the mystic Word or Name of God:

Kingdom, wealth and involvement are not accounted of any avail:

God’s praise (*Hari Kīrtan*, divine Music) is my mainstay,  
and ever enduring is this wealth.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth* 398, *MMS*

See also: **divine Music, Hari Kīrtan** (►2), **Kīrtan**.



**harp(s), Harp of the Holy Spirit, Harp of many tunes** The harp is a large, triangular stringed instrument. Strings, which are plucked by hand, extend downwards from a curved crossbar connecting a sounding board to an upright pillar; one of the instruments used by ancient Middle Eastern mystical writers to refer to the divine music of the Creative Word; also the traditional instrument of the angels, the heavenly beings said to inhabit the inner realms, constantly enjoying the heavenly symphony. This idea has probably arisen from a misunderstanding, for mystics do not refer to any physical instrument when they speak of the souls or of angels playing harps in the heavenly regions. In the early Christian *Odes of Solomon*, the writer specifically mentions the “Harp of Thy Holy Spirit”:

Teach me the psalms of Thy Truth,  
 that I may bring forth fruit in Thee.  
 And open to me the Harp of Thy Holy Spirit,  
 that with all its notes I may praise Thee, O Lord.

*Odes of Solomon 14:7–8*

In another ode, writing with characteristic double meaning, the same poet speaks of singing the praises of the Lord with joy and with the “Harp of many tunes”, allusions to the divine Music and the experience of listening to it:

The Most High will be known through His Holy Ones,  
 who will announce the coming of the Lord  
 to those that sing songs;  
 That they may go forth to meet Him,  
 and may sing to Him with joy,  
 and with the Harp of many tunes....

They who sing will sing of the grace of the Lord most high,  
 and they will bring their songs to Him.  
 And their hearts  
 will be like the light of day;  
 And the music of their voices  
 like the sublime beauty of the Lord.

*Odes of Solomon 7:16–17, 22–23*

Being quite explicit about the association of the “harp” and the Word, a Manichaean psalmist writes loving praises of the Master. The Word, he says, is a “harp” that plays unceasingly:

You made of the Word a harp for yourself,  
 playing unceasingly....  
 What portrait painter can paint this unadorned face?  
 Or what eagle can ascend as you ascend? ...  
 What light can I find to compare with your ray?

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.118*

The “harp” of the Lord is the dance and music of the creation itself, the divine Sound. In another psalm, the liberated souls are described as playing the harp and the lute and “singing unto the hidden Father”. But, once again, there is nothing material about this Music:

Their harps (are) in their hands,  
 singing unto the hidden Father –  
 Their lutes are with them,  
 as they make music unto Him.

*Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.133*

Similarly, speaking of “the sage, the Paraclete”, one of the Manichaean psalmists writes:

The heavens and the congregation of the stars  
 make song with harps and lutes,  
 all worshipping him in joy.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXXVII, MPB p.37*

And again, in a text that speaks of the spiritual ascent of Mānī at the time of his death:

And in great joy, together with the gods of light who accompanied him on the right and on the left, to the sound of harps and songs of joy, he ascended in divine miraculous power, like swift lightning or a shooting star, to the Column of Glory, the path of Light, ... the meeting place of the gods. And there he stayed with God *Ormazd*, the Father.

*Manichaean Text, MM3 p.861, RMP p.; cf. GSR p.215, MEM p.181*

In Hebrew biblical texts, two instruments of the lyre family, the *kinnor* and *nevel* are interchangeably translated as harp and lyre. It is therefore possible that the harps mentioned in the *Odes of Solomon* and these Manichaean psalms were actually a kind of lyre.

See also: **chang, harp and lyre.**

**harp and lyre** (He. *kinnor*, *nevel*) The lyre is an ancient Greek stringed musical instrument constructed out of a tortoise shell as a sound box to which a crossbar with the strings was attached by means of its two projecting arms. The instrument was played with a plectrum and normally used for accompanying songs. There have been a number of variants on this theme since ancient times, including the psaltery, which had a trapezoidal sounding board, over which the strings were stretched. In medieval times, the lyre was an instrument in the violin family, played with a bow.

The lyre is an instrument of great antiquity. It was said to have been played by the legendary Orpheus, the divine singer of Greek mythology. It was also the instrument of Apollo, the Greek god of light, healing, poetry, music and prophecy.

In the Bible, two instruments of the lyre family are commonly translated, almost interchangeably, as the harp (*kinnor*) and lyre (*nevel*). Some translations also speak of the psaltery. The *kinnor* was about twenty to twenty-three inches long. According to the Jewish historian, Josephus (c.37–100 CE), it had ten strings and was played with a plectrum.<sup>1</sup> The *Mishnah* adds that the strings were made from the small intestines of sheep.<sup>2</sup> The *kinnor* was known in pre-Judaic, Canaanite times, which is almost certainly the form which the Israelites would have used. It was the primary stringed instrument of the Semitic races, and became the lead instrument in the Temple orchestra. The biblical King David is traditionally believed to have played the *kinnor*, which was therefore highly esteemed by the Levites.

The *nevel* was a larger form of the *kinnor*, possibly originating in Asia Minor, having a deeper tone, which non-biblical sources describe as “breathy” or “rumbling”.<sup>3</sup> Josephus says that it had twelve strings and was played by plucking with the fingers.<sup>4</sup> The strings, says the *Mishnah*, were made from the large intestines of sheep.<sup>5</sup> The *nevel* was second only to the *kinnor* in the Temple orchestra, and in later times was still of sufficient significance to the Jews to appear on the coins of the Jewish leader, Simon bar Kokhba (d.135 CE). A variant, the *nevel asor*, or just the *asor*, is also mentioned in the *Psalms*.<sup>6</sup> Possibly, it was a smaller version with only ten strings. In non-biblical texts, the *nevel* was also called the *nabla*.

Being the chief instrument of the Temple orchestra in biblical times, as well as a common accompaniment to songs, the various forms of the lyre were used by ancient Middle Eastern mystical writers in reference to the divine Music. As Jesus ben Sirach writes:

Declare the greatness of His Name,  
proclaim His praise with song and with lyre (*kinnor*),  
and this is how you must sing His praises.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 39:15, JB*

As in many such instances, it is difficult to determine whether the author is speaking of divine or material music. However, when the writer is clearly conversant with the creative Power – as in the case of Jesus ben Sirach, who calls it the Wisdom of God – then there is a strong likelihood of the intended meaning being that of the inner Music.

This is also true of many of the biblical psalms. In one, the psalmist is clearly speaking of his inner life with God, when he adds, “I will praise You with the lyre”:

By day the Lord will command His lovingkindness,  
 and in the night His Song (*Shir*) shall be with me,  
 a prayer to the God of my life....  
 O send out Your light and Your truth:  
 let them lead me;  
 Let them bring me to Your holy mountain,  
 and to Your dwelling places.  
 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my great joy;  
 And I will praise You with the lyre (*kinnor*), O God my God.

*Psalm 42:9, 43:3,4, JCL*

Likewise, another psalm links the Creative “Word of *Yahweh*” with a “new Song” and making “music to Him” on the harp and lyre:

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous:  
 for praise befits the upright.  
 Praise the Lord with a lyre (*kinnor*):  
 make music to Him with the harp of ten strings (*nevel asor*).  
 Sing to Him a new Song (*Shir*):  
 play skilfully with joyful sounds (*teru‘ah*).

The Word of *Yahweh* is integrity itself:  
 all He does is done faithfully;  
 He loves virtue and justice:  
*Yahweh*’s love fills the earth.  
 By the Word of *Yahweh* the heavens were made:  
 their whole array by the Breath of His Mouth.

*Psalm 33:1–6; cf. JCL, JB*

Understanding that listening to the divine Music was commonly described as singing and playing music to God highlights the probable mystic meaning in many of the psalms. The psalmist exhorts himself to awake at “dawn”, to become aware of the mystic presence and “glory” of God within, to awaken his inner “harp and lyre”:

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast:  
 I will sing and give praise.  
 Wake up, my glory!  
 Awake, harp (*nevel*) and lyre (*kinnor*)!  
 I will awaken the dawn!

*Psalm 57:8–9; cf. KB*

In another psalm, the harp, the lyre, the *shofar* (ram’s horn) and tambourine are all invoked in praise of God “in His sanctuary”. Literally, the sanctuary is the holy of holies in the Temple. Metaphorically, if that was the intended meaning in this instance, it refers to the divine eternity:

Hallelujah! Praise God in His sanctuary!  
 Praise Him in the firmament of His power!  
 Praise Him for His mighty acts!  
 Praise Him according to His exceeding greatness!  
 Praise Him with the sound of the *shofar*!  
 Praise Him with the harp (*nevel*) and the lyre (*kinnor*)!  
 Praise Him with the tambourine and dance!  
 Praise Him with stringed instruments and the pipe!  
 Praise Him with sounding cymbals!  
 Praise Him with loud clashing cymbals!  
 Let every thing that breathes praise the Lord! Hallelujah!

*Psalm 150, 1–6, JCL*

Traditionally, authorship of the psalms is attributed to King David, though it is acknowledged that not all, if any, were actually written by him. David is generally portrayed as a devout man. According to the biblical story, he is only a boy when Samuel anoints him, and the “Spirit of the Lord came upon David”. Saul, on the other hand, is oppressed by an evil spirit. Saul’s servants therefore advise him to find someone to play the lyre, “and thou shalt be well”. On their advice, Saul calls David to play the lyre for him, and “Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”<sup>7</sup>

The story is possibly allegorical, the music that refreshes the spirit being the divine Music. There is certainly a rabbinic legend which places a spiritual interpretation upon the tradition of David as a musician, concerning a celestial harp that would awaken David at midnight:

Rabbi Simeon the pious said, “A harp was suspended over David’s bed. When midnight arrived, the north wind came and blew on the harp, which started to play by itself. Immediately, David arose and became occupied in *Torah* until dawn.”

*Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 3b, in HVJM p.134*

The meaning becomes clear when it is understood that in Hebrew “wind” also means ‘spirit’. The “harp” is the divine Music of the Spirit that sounds spontaneously, “by itself”, awakening David to engage in his inner spiritual devotions. Being “occupied in *Torah*” – the divine Word or Law – also means the same.

See also: **chang**.

1. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 7:12.3 (306).
2. *Mishnah, Kinnim* 3:6.
3. “Music History”, in *Encyclopedia Judaica, EJCD*.
4. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 7:12.3 (306).
5. *Mishnah, Kinnim* 3:6.
6. *Psalm* 33:2, 92:4, 144:9.
7. *1 Samuel* 16:1ff., *KJV*.

**hsī Yīn (xī Yīn), hsī Shén (xī Shén)** (C) *Lit.* rarefied (*hsī*) tone (*Yīn*); rarefied (*hsī*) Sound (*Shén*); a rarefied, subtle tone; a lofty, transcendent sound, faint, unspecified and difficult to discern because of its transcendent nature; also called *T’iēn Yüeh* (Music of Heaven, divine Music). *Hsī Yīn* is implied when Lǎo Tzu writes:

Great music is faintly heard;  
Great form has no contour;  
And *Tào* is hidden without a name.  
It is this *Tào* that is adept at lending (its power)  
and bringing fulfilment.

*Lǎo Tzu, Tào Té Chīng 41, WLT p.211*

See also: **divine Music (Taoism)**.

**inner Music** See **divine Music**.

**jaras** (A/P) (pl. *ajrās*) *Lit.* bell, particularly a little bell. According to Islamic tradition:

The Prophet said that this manifestation of the *Qur’ān* came in two ways: “Sometimes Gabriel reveals to me as one man to another, and that is easy; but at other times it is like the ringing of a bell (*lit.* striking

of *ajrās* – little bells – on stone), penetrating my very heart, rending me, and that way is the most painful.”

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1:1.2, in CEI p.335; cf. in MP p.39*

Ḥāfiẓ says that the sound of the bell (*jaras*) flows from the home of the divine Beloved:

No one knows where the Beloved’s dwelling is,  
except that the sound of the bell (*jaras*) flows from there.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīwān, DHA p.111, DHM (238:5) p.240, DIH p.200; cf. DHWC (206:5) p.382*

And Jāmī says humbly:

I know that I cannot reach the caravan where my Beloved is.  
It is enough for me that the sound (*bāng*) of his bell (*jaras*)  
reaches constantly to my ears.

*Jāmī, in Risālah-i Ḥaqq Numā, COT p.18*

See also: **bells of the Holy Spirit, ghañṭā.**

**jhāñjh** (H) Small cymbals used to help maintain rhythm in devotional songs and dance, consisting of a pair of flat metal circular discs, each with a hole in the centre, and fastened by a cotton cord to one another; one disc is held in each hand, and the pair are struck together at rhythmic intervals to produce a percussive sound.

The clanging sound of the *jhāñjh*, invoking the carefree sense of joyous song and dance, has been mentioned by mystics in descriptions of the sounds heard within. Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh writes:

Trinkets and cymbals (*jhāñjh*) resound within:  
luminous is the lustre of the anklet.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 6:20.15, SBP p.66*

Referring to the five Sounds of the five main heavenly realms as the “five friends”, Kabīr says:

The five friends together sing the song of bliss  
meditating on the *Guru*’s Word.  
From the unstruck Sound (*anhad Shabd*)  
emanates the symphony of the gong,  
*mṛidang* (a classical drum), *jhāñjh* and *daph* (tambourine).

*Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Shabd 5:1, KSS1 p.77*

And Mīrābāī writes that although she hears the Sound within, her mystic Beloved is playing hide and seek with her:

My body is burning (with longing),  
I hear the symphony of *jhāñjh*,  
*mṛidang* (a classical drum) and *muralī* (flute).  
It is spring, but my Beloved is not at home.

*Mīrābāī, Shabdāvalī, Rāg Holī 2:3, MBS p.37*

**jhankār** (H) A ringing, clanking or similar sound; thus, tinkling, jingling, jangling, clinking, clanking, rattling, ringing, buzzing, humming, twanging, sounding, playing; a general word used for many kinds of musical and similar sounds, as in the ‘*jhankār* of the *vīṇā*’ (the sound or playing of the *vīṇā*). Mystically, *jhankār* is used for the divine Sound. Speaking of the inner realms, Kabīr writes:

Sound (*jhankār*) arises  
with no musical instrument.  
It is heard in contemplation.

*Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī 19:1, KSS1 p.64*

Mīrābāī speaks of the *anhad* (unstruck) *jhankār*:

Without cymbals, without drums,  
the *anhad jhankār* is present everywhere.  
Without a tune, without a sound, without a pause,  
the melody resounds, filling every pore of my body.

*Mīrābāī, Shabdāvalī, Rāg Holī 1:1–2, MBS p.37; cf. MDL p.140*

And Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh writes of the sounds heard in *mahā sunn* (the great void), a vast realm of darkness that the soul must cross to reach the threshold of eternity:

Four hidden sounds are heard here,  
and the soul hears many new melodies.  
How can I describe these wonderful sounds (*jhankārs*)?  
I am enraptured upon hearing them.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 26:3.8–9, SBP p.227*

**jhingur** (H) *Lit.* a cricket; a small insect, of which there are many different species distributed throughout the world, the males of which make an incessant chirruping sound by rubbing together their leathery forewings; one of



the sounds heard in the initial stages of meditation is said to resemble that of the *jhingur*; also called *bṇḍā* in Punjabi.

There are a number of sounds heard as the soul rises up from the body to the centre behind the eyes and moves further inwards towards the astral realms. All but one, including that of the *jhingur*, are local sounds, associated with that level of creation. Only the sound of the big bell or gong, which comes from *sahans dal kanwal*, the central powerhouse of the astral plane, can draw the soul upwards.

Mystics have also used the sound of the *jhingur* as a general reference to the sounds heard in the higher realms of creation. The Indian Saint Kabīr writes:

Close your eyes, your ears and your mouth,  
and listen to the *anhad* (unstruck) *Shabd*  
that has the sound of a cricket (*jhingur*).

*Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī 22:10, KSSI p.65*

And, likewise, Dariyā Sāhib:

There you will find brilliance and splendour all about,  
the loud sound of the cricket (*jhingur*) can be heard everywhere.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Chune hue Shabd, Basant 5:7, DSC p.22*

**kingrī** (P/Pu/H) A stringed instrument, somewhat similar to the *vīṇā*, made of two or more small gourds or sound boxes, between which are stretched two strings that are played with a bow. Guru Nānak identifies the inner sound of the *kingrī* with the Word:

The *kingrī* resounds night and day  
within all the hearts which bear sublime love to God's Name  
(*Shabd*, Word).

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 62, MMS*

Some mystics have described the sound heard in *daswān dwār* or *sunṇ*, the realm immediately above the universal mind, as something like the sound of the *kingrī*. Thus, Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh writes:

Circling about, the soul ascends to the top of the *sunṇ* region,  
where the music of *kingrī* and *sārangī* abounds.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 26:3.4, SBP p.227*

And addressing yogis who play upon the outer instrument with the intention of receiving spiritual benefit, Guru Amardās says:

By means of this *kingrī*, thy attention shall be fixed not,  
 nor shalt thou obtain the true Name in thy skirt, O *yogī*.  
 By means of this *kingrī*, thou shalt neither find peace,  
 nor shall ego depart from within thee, O *yogī*.  
 Fix the fear and love of the Lord,  
 as the two gourds to thy *kingrī*, O *yogī*,  
 and make this body of thine, its frame  
 If thou become virtuous, then shall the string play:  
 in this way, thy desire shall depart....  
 O *yogī*, play thou the *kingrī*, which plays without being struck.  
 Says Nānak, thus shalt thou be emancipated,  
 O *yogī*, and remain merged in the true Lord.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 908–9, MMS*

**Kīrtan** (H/Pu), **Kīrat** (Pu) *Lit.* song, singing, particularly of a religious nature; the singing of hymns to the accompaniment of instruments; the playing of devotional music and ecstatic dancing in Hindu temples; singing songs and playing on musical instruments; hence also, praise of God; mystically, listening to the divine Melody within; hence, the eternal reverberation of the divine Music throughout creation, also called *Hari Kīrtan* (God's Music) and *akhaṇḍ Kīrtan* (the unbroken Song):

Says Nānak, they who have the perfect true *Guru* as their guide  
 enjoy the incessant lauding of praises (*akhaṇḍ Kīrtan*, unbroken Song)  
 of the Lord as their food and dainty.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 236, MMS*

The soul (*man*, mind) is sated  
 by lovingly singing Lord's praises (*Kīrtan*, divine Music).

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 299, MMS*

See also: **Hari Kīrtan, Song.**

**lute** An ancient, guitar-like, plucked musical instrument, consisting of a body shaped like a pear cut in half, lengthwise, to which gut strings are attached from the head of a long, fretted fingerboard. One of the musical instruments commonly used to describe the music of the higher realms, especially by Middle Eastern mystics. Among the Manichaeian psalms, there are a number of references to the lute and to music generally, which are clearly allusions to the inner Music, not to the songs and instruments of the world. Addressing Jesus, one of these psalms says:

You are a lover of hymns,  
 you are a lover of music ... playing the lute....  
 You make music unto the Father,  
 and play the lute to the beloved Son.  
 You make music to the ambrosia,  
 and play the lute to the King of Life.  
 You make music to the land of light,  
 and play the lute to the Living Air.  
 You make music to the *aeons*,  
 and play the lute  
 to the *aeons* of the *aeons* (the heavenly realms).  
 You make music to the Tree of Life....  
 You are a lover of hymns, you are a lover of music....  
 they make music before you.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB pp.168–69*

Again, in a verse which speaks of the soul's detachment from the world and attachment to God, one psalm has the evocative line, "my lute becomes new daily":

I have gathered everything in:  
 That which is in my hand,  
 I have fastened to the Root.  
 What other way can I now turn?  
 My lute becomes new daily.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.155*

Every day, in their meditation, such devotees spend time in conscious and direct communion with the divine and eternally "new" music of the Word.

See also: **tantrī**, 'ūd.

**mizmor** (He) *Lit.* psalm, song.

See **Song**.

**mṛidang(a)** (S/H), **mardang** (Pu) An ancient and perhaps the most sophisticated of India's many percussion instruments; in southern India, the traditional rhythm and percussion instrument in any performance of Indian classical music. In the north, the *mṛidang* is also called the *pakhāvaj*, with minor differences in the construction and the playing technique. However, except

in ultratraditional classical music, its use has been largely superseded by the well-known *tablā*.

The *mṛidang* is an oval-shaped, double-ended, tunable drum with a number of sophistications which provide it with a range of sounds. The southern *mṛidang* is hollowed out of a block of wood about eighteen to twenty-four inches long, and open at both ends. Two skins are stretched tightly over the ends and secured with leather thongs which are attached to a network of leather braces extending over the entire sides of the drum. Round blocks of wood are placed beneath the leather braces enabling the ends of the drum to be tuned. Generally, the two ends are tuned one octave apart.

A mixture of flour and water is usually worked into the middle of the left-hand end in order to deepen the pitch, also adding to the resonance of the instrument, giving it a full, bass character. This plaster is carefully scraped off each time after use.

The centre portion of the right-hand end is given a permanent coating of a black substance consisting of boiled rice, manganese dust, iron filings and other materials. It is this which gives the *mṛidang* its characteristic tone, enabling it to be tuned to a particular pitch.

A wide range of sounds and tones can be produced from the *mṛidang* by striking the different parts of the two ends, including the rims, with the flat of the hand, with the fingers clamped or released, and so on. Although designed as an accompanying instrument, every recital of classical music will usually have a short solo piece on the *mṛidang*.

No doubt because of its popularity and its long tradition, the sound of the *mṛidang* has been used by mystics to describe the deep resounding of the Sound Current as it is heard in *trikuṭī*, the causal realm of the universal mind. In a poem describing the inner realms, Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh writes:

Now, my friend, move on to the second stage,  
and behold the plane of *trikuṭī*...  
The bell and conch sounds are left behind,  
and the sound of the *mardang* is heard....  
After that, your soul resumes its upward journey.  
Now comes the sound (*nawbat*) of a huge drum,  
beaten incessantly.  
Here the soul has grasped the primal Current, ...  
from which all creation emanates.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 26:2.1, 5, 9–11, SBP pp.226–27*

The mystic Dayābāi writes in a similar vein:

The big bell (*ghaṇṭā*) resounds  
 to the rhythm (*tāl*) and sound of the *mṛidang*,  
 and the continuous thundering of clouds.  
 Rare is the *sādhū* (holy man) who hears it  
 with the grace of the *Guru*, O Dayā.

*Dayābāt, Bānī, Ajapā 16, DBB p.11*

The *mṛidanga* is also listed in the *Haṃsa Upanishad* as one of ten sounds heard within during yogic practice.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **devadundubhi**, **Nāda** (3.1).

1. *Haṃsa Upanishad* 16.

**muralī** (S/H), **muraliyā** (H/Pu) The Indian flute; another name for the *baṃsarī*. The sound heard in the spiritual realm which lies on the doorstep, so to speak, of eternity has been described by many mystics as resembling that of the flute. Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh calls this region *guphā* (cave), *bhanwar guphā* (rotating cave) or *sohang* (I am He), and refers to eternity as *sach khaṇḍ* (true region) and *sat lok* (true realm):

I heard the melodies of the flute (*muralī*) in *guphā*; ...  
 In *sach khaṇḍ*, there rose the strains of the *bīn* (*vīṇā*).

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 34:13.20–21, SBP p.290*

I went to *sohang* in *bhanwar guphā*:  
 delight was mine on hearing the strains of the flute (*muralī*).  
 From there I ascended to *sat lok*,  
 and met the perfect Master.

*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 6:14.18–19, SBP p.62*

Similarly, Kabīr says:

Behold the union of the two mountains:  
 the Saints call it *bhanwar guphā*.  
 There, the *haṃsas* (lit. swans, pure souls) play in blissful sport;  
 There lies the court (*darbār*) of the *Guru*.  
 Eighty-eight thousand spheres has He (the Lord) created,  
 furnished with palaces studded with diamonds and rubies.  
 The unstruck music of the flute (*muralī*) plays on forever;  
 There is heard the resounding of *sohang*.

*Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī 22:22–23, KSS1 pp.66–67*

Dūlandās also speaks of the melody of the flute:

Some enjoy the tune of melodious songs,  
 others the stories of the *Purāṇas* (Indian mythological texts).  
 What should Dūlan, the servant of the Lord, hear?  
 For he listens with rapt attention  
 to the transcendent melody of the flute (*muraliyā*).

*Dūlandās, in Sant Bānī Sangrah 1, Shabd Mahimā 4, SBS1 p.128*

See also: **baṃsari**, **flute**, **nāy**.

**Music (Cosmic), Music of the gods, Music of the Spheres** A Greek notion, generally understood as the celestial sound or music produced by the ordered movement of the stars and planets through the heavens. The idea is usually attributed to the mystic Pythagoras (b.c.580 BCE), to whom a belief in the power of music is ascribed. It is likely, however, that later conceptions are a misunderstanding of the mystical reality to which he actually referred. Not long after Pythagoras, the enigmatic Heraclitus (c.535–475 BCE) is certainly pointing to a difference between the inner and the outer music when he observes:

The hidden harmony is better than the obvious.

*Heraclitus, Fragment 116, HPW p.102*

Hellenic mythology contains many references to musicians charming the gods of the nether world, a supernatural feat probably originating in legends surrounding the Thracian poet and divine singer, Orpheus. Whether Orpheus was a historical character or existed only in myth is uncertain, but if he did live, it would probably have been during the period 1450–1150 BCE, and certainly before the time of Homer (c.800 BCE). He came, therefore, from an era when mystical realities were described by means of allegorical myth, and the stories of his exploits and divine voice are not without their mystical aspects.

Traditionally, Orpheus was renowned as a singer and player of the lyre, the instrument of Apollo, god of light, music, poetry and prophecy. According to legend, the voice of Orpheus was so sweet and captivating that not only were the birds and animals enchanted by the sound of his music, but even the trees and rocks were softened by his playing, moving from place to place at his behest.

Orpheus also travelled with Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece, guarded by a fierce dragon who never slept. During these adventures (undertaken after a visit to Egypt, regarded as the repository of

mystic lore in the ancient world), it was often the music of Orpheus which saved the Argonauts from difficulties or disaster.

On one occasion, the seductive sirens, by the sweetness of their song, threatened to entice the adventurers onto the rocks they inhabited, and thus to compromise their quest entirely. But Orpheus played and sang a sweeter song, and the Argonauts listened to him rather than the sirens, and so passed by in safety. Understood allegorically, it is the divine Music of a Master who steers souls past the allurements of creation, whether of this world or the heavenly realms, keeping them on the path that leads to eternity.

Classical scholar, Dean Inge, comments that the Orphics taught "that the soul of man is 'fallen'; it is in prison.... It is 'an exile from God and a wanderer'. It retains its individuality ... through all its transmigrations."<sup>1</sup>

The real 'supernatural' and sweet music is the divine music of the *Logos* (Word), and there are many allusions in Greek literature which appear to stem from an understanding of this eternal principle in creation.

Pythagoras, for instance, was said to have effected miraculous cures in his disciples through the power of his music, not only healing bodily ills, but also quieting the human passions and even curing madness. Expressing his own understanding, the Neo-Platonist Iamblichus, writing in the third century CE, describes Pythagoras' use of external music,

by means of which, he easily changed and curbed the mental passions which had recently arisen in his followers, passions which luxuriated in pain and anger, self-pity and jealousy, traumatic fears, desires in various shapes, and aggressions and appetites, together with slackness, sluggishness and vehemence.

*Iamblichus, Life of Pythagoras 15:64, VPL pp.35:28–36:5; cf. PL p.155*

Writing a thousand years after the event, Iamblichus had no first-hand witnesses to guide him, and although human music may have a powerful calming and even therapeutic influence, the highest healing is always of the soul by means of the mystic Music. This Music heals the madness of a soul who has forgotten its own innate spirituality and become engrossed in matter. If Pythagoras did teach the path of divine Music, then the traditional information related by Iamblichus is inaccurate only in the nature of the music that brought about the healing.

Formulation of the laws of cosmic harmony is also attributed to Pythagoras, although such ideas appear to have existed before him, their origins being credited by Plutarch and Philo Judaeus to the Chaldeans. Pythagoras is said to have taught that the universe is put together by means of harmonic laws, thereby producing rhythmic melody through the motions of the seven 'planets' (the five planets known at that time, plus the sun and moon). As all discoveries concerning the Pythagorean cosmos were dependent on the

numerical ratios sounded on a stretched string or monochord, it was reported by the third-century (CE) Neo-Platonic musical theorist Aristidēs Quintilianus that Pythagoras' dying injunction to his students was to "work the monochord".<sup>2</sup> This too, perhaps, was an allusion to the divine and mystic Music.

Interestingly, also, the word 'theory (*theoria*)' is understood to be an Orphic term originally meaning "passionate, sympathetic contemplation".<sup>3</sup> It is said that in the case of Pythagoras, the fruit of such contemplation was the laws of mathematics, numbers and musical harmony. That is, his knowledge was believed to have arisen from revelation, received in a state of ecstatic meditation. None of Pythagoras' original teachings survived, however, and this may well have been a later misinterpretation of Pythagoras' real mystic knowledge.

The earliest definitive Greek account of the formation of the universe through the laws of harmony is given by Plato in the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*. In the *Timaeus*, the story is told of the fashioning by the Demiurge (Gk. *Demiourgos*, lit. craftsman) of the World Soul, understood as a living soul which pervades the universe.

*Timaeus* points out that that which is eternal and indivisible can only be apprehended by the *Nous* and *Logos*, names for the primary divine Intelligence lying behind all created things. Since this is always unchanging, it is referred to as the "Same". Whatever is changing is apprehended by "Opinion (*Doxa*)", which is in the nature of conjectural knowledge, obtained with the help of the senses. This element is called the "Other" or "Difference". The world, being of the senses, cannot be eternal and must, therefore, have been created.

The Demiurge fashions the universe as a likeness of an ideal or pattern in the eternal world. In the body of the universe, which is likened to a living being, he places the World Soul, which was created beforehand, and which pervades and surrounds the entire universe. The World Soul is fashioned by mixing – in a particular proportion – the infinite, unchanging element (the Same) with the finite, changing, divisible element (the Other), and dividing the mixture according to certain ratios that outline the Pythagorean harmonic world. The result is a musical scale of nearly five octaves. Out of this compound of 'soul stuff', the Demiurge formed an outer ring of the "Same" (the firmament of the fixed stars) and an inner ring of the "Other", subdivided in turn into seven unequal rings (the orbits of the seven 'planets'), according to certain musical intervals. The outer ring moves in an opposite direction to the seven inner rings, the motions of all the rings being infused with harmony and due proportion.

In the vision of Er, at the end of Plato's *Republic*, this heavenly harmony is described in specifically mystical terms as a resounding music. Er, a Pamphylian warrior slain in battle, is given an experience of the next world



before returning to life to describe what he has seen. In modern language, he has a near-death experience. His description does not mention harmonic laws, but among many other experiences, he does describe a music which is evidently the music of the these spheres.<sup>4</sup> His vision includes a model of the universe as a planetary system consisting of a set of concentric rings or whorls turning on the adamantine spindle of Necessity, adamant being a mythical rock of fabulous properties including extreme hardness and unchangeability. The rims of these whorls are of different sizes and colours, revolving at different speeds – the seven inner ones in opposite directions to the movement of the outer rim, the firmament of the fixed stars. And, “On the upper surface of each circle stands a siren, who goes round with them, chanting a single tone or note. The eight together form one harmony.”<sup>5</sup> The voices of the three Fates, daughters of Necessity, accompany the harmony of the sirens. It is perhaps worth noting that the concept of a geocentric universe predates Plato, and was not an unnatural conclusion given the astronomical data available.<sup>6</sup>

Later writers commented and expanded upon Plato’s description. Among the most popular was Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis* (*The Dream of Scipio*), the account of a dream-vision placed at the end of his *De Republica*, as in Plato. Cicero (106–43 BCE) propounds the view that the “great and pleasing sound” of the universe is produced by the motion of the spheres in a concord of “carefully proportioned intervals”, there being seven planetary tones in all. Later commentators such as Macrobius (fl.c.400 CE) equated these seven tones with the seven numbers in Plato’s geometric series in the *Timaeus*. Ordinary mortals cannot normally hear the sublime music of the cosmos; it reveals itself only in a vision or after death. Terrestrial music is a mere imitation.<sup>7</sup>

Like Orpheus, Pythagoras is also said to have played the lyre, though this may also be a metaphor for his communion with the mystic Music. More than a few of the Greek mystics and philosophers spoke of this Cosmic Music. Many of the later philosophers, however, considered it to originate from the movement of the sun, the moon, the planets and the fixed stars as they moved along the surface of hollow, heavenly, crystalline spheres, concentric around the earth;<sup>8</sup> for these later philosophers understood Plato’s circles to be composed of some translucent material such as fire, air or crystal. Even Iamblichus speaks of the higher “harmonies of the cosmos” – the “universal Music” – by which he means the music caused by the movement of the external heavenly bodies:

Concentrating his hearing and mind, he (Pythagoras) immersed himself in the drifting harmonies of the cosmos. According to him, he alone could hear them, and understand the harmonies and concords of the spheres and the heavenly bodies which moved along them.

The universal Music was at once more fulsome and overpowering than mortal melodies, consisting as it did of unlike elements and variegated sounds of bodies whose speed, size and position were so variable; these bodies being arranged in relation to one another in the most musical of ratios to produce a melody which vibrated through the wondrously beautiful motion and melodious convolutions of the sky.

*Iamblichus, Life of Pythagoras 15:65–66, VPL pp.36:18–37:2; cf. PL p.155*

Iamblichus is describing the Music of the Spheres as the later Greeks understood it, but this is not the Music to which Pythagoras would have listened. In fact, Pythagoras and his followers would never have encountered the theory in the form in which Iamblichus presents it, because the doctrine of material, crystalline spheres was introduced long after their time.<sup>9</sup> In his interpretative biography, Iamblichus is right that Pythagoras heard the Cosmic Music but, even allowing for the existence of the theory in its more general form in Pythagoras' day, he is mistaken in his interpretation of its source and nature.

The sixth-century philosopher, Simplicius, one of a number of philosophers who sought refuge in Persia after the Roman Emperor Justinian closed down Plato's Athenian Academy in 529 CE, also speaks of the Pythagorean belief in a "harmonic sound ... produced from the motion of the celestial bodies", continuing:

The sound of the divine bodies is not audible by terrestrial ears. But if any one like Pythagoras, who is reported to have heard this harmony, should have his terrestrial body exempt from him (should leave his body), and his luminous and celestial vehicle (his astral body), and the senses which it contains, purified, either through a good allotment (destiny), or through probity (purity) of life, or through a perfection arising from spiritual practices, such a one will perceive things invisible to others, and will hear things inaudible to others.

*Simplicius, on Aristotle's On the Heavens 2; cf. ILP p.33 (n.1)*

Simplicius points out that to hear this Music, the soul must leave the body. Likewise, and clearly speaking of the inner source of this Music, the third-century (CE) Neo-Platonist, Plotinus, also wrote:

We must turn the perceptive faculty inward and hold it to attention there. Hoping to hear a longed-for Voice, we let all others pass, and are alert for the coming at last of that most welcome of Sounds: so here, we must let the hearings of sense go by, save for sheer necessity,

and keep the soul's perception bright and quick to the Sounds from above.

*Plotinus, Enneads 5:1.12; cf. PEC p.214*

One of the works attributed to Pythagoras by antiquity was the *Release of the Soul* in which it was made clear that the goal of Pythagoras and his disciples was to attain purification and subsequent release of the soul by listening to the "Music of the gods".<sup>10</sup> As Iamblichus puts it:

He (Pythagoras) divinely healed and purified the soul, resuscitated and saved its divine part, leading to the spiritual its divine eye, which, as Plato says, is more worth saving than ten thousand corporeal eyes. For by looking through this alone, when it is clarified by appropriate aids (*i.e.* spiritual practice), the truth pertaining to all beings is perceived.

*Iamblichus, Life of Pythagoras 16; cf. ILP p.37*

Likewise, speaking of Pythagoras' supposed use of external music, Iamblichus again describes its healing qualities in terms commonly used for the mystic Music:

He called the medicine which is obtained through music by the name of purification.

*Iamblichus, Life of Pythagoras 25, ILP p.59*

And similarly, seeming once again to mistake the internal music for the external:

When they went to bed, they purified the reasoning power from the perturbations and noises to which it had been exposed during the day, by certain odes and peculiar songs. By this means procured for themselves tranquil sleep, with few but good dreams. And when they rose from bed, they again liberated themselves from the torpor and heaviness of sleep, by songs of another kind.

*Iamblichus, Life of Pythagoras 25; cf. ILP p.61*

See also: **Demiurge** (6.1), **divine Music**.

1. W.R. Inge, *Philosophy of Plotinus*, PPI2 p.201.
2. "Pythagorean Harmony of the Universe", in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, DHI4 p.39a.
3. F.M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, FRP p.198.
4. Plato, *Republic* 10:614–19.

5. Plato, *Republic* 10:617b, *DP2* p.495.
6. For the theories of Plato, see Plato, *Timaeus* and *Republic*; Introductions to *Timaeus* and *Republic*, B. Jowett, *DP3* p.631ff. and *DP2* p.1ff.; and *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*, A.H. Armstrong, *IAP* p.47ff.
7. “Pythagorean Harmony of the Universe”, in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, *DHI4* p.40.
8. See Peter Gorman, *Pythagoras: A Life*, *PL* p.170.
9. See Peter Gorman, *Pythagoras: A Life*, *PL* p.170.
10. Peter Gorman, *Pythagoras: A Life*, *PL* p.161.

**naḥfīrī** (P/H) A small Indian wind instrument of the same family as the *shahnāī*; a double-reed instrument in which a pair of reeds are attached to a metal tube inserted into a hollow, funnel-shaped, wooden body. The main pipe is usually about eight inches long with seven main playing holes, although others may be added; sometimes likened to the Sound heard in the inner realms. Echoing the *Haṃsa Upanishad*, which also lists ten sounds heard within (though not the *naḥfīrī*), Charaṇdās writes:

The ninth (has) the sound of a *naḥfīrī*.

*Charaṇdās, Bhakti Sāgar, Aṣṭāṅga Yoga Varṇan 57, BSCD p.64*

See also: **Nāda** (3.1).

**naghmah** (A/P), **naghamah** (A) (pl. A/P. *naghmāt*, P. *naghmhā*) *Lit.* a soft, sweet voice; a musical sound, tone, note; melody, song, music; metaphorically, the melody of the divine creative power, heard within as enchanting and unending music; commonly used in Sufī literature, where the inner music is often likened to various musical instruments – the lyre (*chang*), the *nāy* (reed flute) and so on.

Rūmī says that when these spiritual “notes (*naghmhā*)” are heard, they have the power to bring life to those who are spiritually dead, causing them to rise from the ‘tomb’ of the body and enter the heavenly realms. This music is not far off, he says, it is within. The physical ear cannot hear it, but those who have opened their inner faculty of hearing can hear it clearly:

The prophets also have (spiritual) notes (*naghmhā*) within,  
whence there comes life beyond price to them that seek.

The sensual ear does not hear those notes,  
for the sensual ear is defiled by iniquities....

The inward notes of the Saints say, at first,

“O you particles of *lā* (*lit.* not, nonbeing)  
 take heed, lift up your heads from the *lā* of negation,  
 put forth your heads from this fancy and vain imagining.  
 O you who all are rotten  
 in the world of generation and decay,  
 your everlasting soul neither grew nor came to birth.”  
 If I tell even a little of those notes (*naghmhā*),  
 the souls will lift up their heads from the tombs.  
 Put your ear close, for it is not far off,  
 but it is not permitted to convey it to you.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I: 1919–20, 1925–29; cf. MJR2 pp.104–5*

See also: **chang**.

**nawbah** (A), **nawbat** (P) *Lit.* change, alternation, shift, rotation; hence, change of the guard, guard duty. In Muslim countries, it is customary to beat a large drum or play an assortment of musical instruments at palace gates in honour of the sovereign. This music, played five times daily, is sometimes called *nawbat*, perhaps because it shares the flourish and pomp of the changing of the guard. Hence, *nawbat* refers to a small traditional band who beat the ‘drums of honour’ to announce that a sovereign is in residence.

Rūmī writes metaphorically of the *panj nawbat* (five sounds, five playings of the music of honour). Commentators have interpreted this expression as referring simply to the music played at palace gates, or sometimes as the call to prayer, five times daily, or the mention of Muḥammad’s name five times daily at the time of prayer. However, since Rūmī characteristically sees things from a mystic point of view, the expression is probably an allusion to the inner Sound as it manifests in the higher realms of creation. The divine inner Melody has a different sound at each level of the creation. Indian mystics have referred to ‘five Sounds (*pañch Shabd*)’ and have called the practice of the sounds ‘the path of the five Sounds’.

Rūmī compares the power and glory of worldly kings with that of Muḥammad, who, he says, heard the *panj nawbat* continually:

Their names, the rapid torrent of death has borne away:  
 his name and his mighty destiny are not dead.  
 For him (Muḥammad), the *panj nawbat* is always beaten  
 in this way, every day till the Day of Resurrection.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV: 2800–1; cf. MJR4 pp.426–27*

He also says, referring explicitly to the other-worldly Music:

Listen in silence to the five melodies (*pañj nawbat*)  
 coming from the firmament –  
 The firmament which is beyond the five (senses)  
 and the six (directions).

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz* 855:8937, *KSD2* p.177, *KDS1* p.346; cf. *DSTR* p.138

See also: **pañch Shabd**.

**nay, nāy, nai** (P) *Lit.* reed; hence, a reedpipe, a flute; a flute of varying sizes, without a mouthpiece, made of reed, bamboo or occasionally wood. ‘Ināyat Khān says that the *nay* is among a number of instruments played by dervishes in an attempt to bring them into tune with the inner Melody (*Naghmah*):

*Yogīs* and ascetics blow *singī* (a horn) or *shankha* (a conch shell) which awakens in them this inner tone. Dervishes play *nay* or *alghozah* (a double flute) for the same purpose. The bells and gongs in the churches and temples are meant to suggest to the thinker the same sacred Sound, and thus lead him towards the inner life.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2* p.63

As used by Sufis, the *nāy* may sometimes refer to a physical instrument, as indicated by ‘Ināyat Khān. However, it is also used frequently to describe the Melody heard within in mystic practice. This Sound does not consist of physical vibrations, and is not heard by the physical ears. It is a divine Power which is experienced after the inner faculty of hearing has been awakened. Ḥāfiẓ says that the divine Beloved sends “her message to the heart” in the music of “lyre and reedpipe”, and confirms her love through the experience of bliss:

She sends her message to the heart,  
 first by the tune of the lyre and reedpipe (*nay*);  
 Then confirms her fidelity to me  
 with the wine in the winecup.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA* p.48, *DHM* (125:2) p.141, *DIH* p.116, in *SSE1* p.171

The flute or reedpipe has a particularly plaintive sound, a wailing, a lament. In Sufi poetry, it often represents not only the inner Music, but also the pain of separation from God:

Love’s tales, which transcend syntax and sound,  
 are crying and lamenting aloud in the wail  
 of the flute (*nay*) and the tambourine.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA* p.55, *DHM* (141:2) p.154, *DIH* p.128, in *SSE1* p.171

As the soul ascends through the inner realms of creation, this divine Melody is experienced as different sounds in each successive region. Some mystics, particularly those of India, have compared the sound heard in each region to a specific musical instrument. The sound heard on the threshold of eternity is likened to that of a flute. It is in this region that the soul, newly separated from God, experiences most keenly the pang of separation from its divine Source. It is with an expression of this longing for God that Rūmī opens the *Maṣnavī*:

Listen to the reed (*nay*) how it tells a tale,  
complaining of separation –  
Saying, “Ever since I was parted from the reed bed,  
my lament has caused man and woman to moan.  
I want a bosom torn by severance,  
that I may unfold the pain of love desire.  
Everyone who is left far from his source  
wishes back time when he was united with it.” ...

’Tis the fire of love that is in the reed (*nay*),  
’tis the fervour of love that is in the wine.  
The reed (*nay*) is the comrade of every one  
who has been parted from a friend:  
Its strains rent our veils.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1–4, 10–11; cf. MJR2 p.5*

Listening to this divine Sound, the soul of the mystic loses all sense of distinction between the self and the Melody. The soul merges into the Sound, becoming one with the Sound. Thus, Rūmī likens the mystic seeker to a reed through which God plays His Music. For as long as the soul is filled with thoughts of past and future, he is a knotty, unperforated reed, incapable of being played as a flute by God; he is cut off from the divine Breath:

Past and future are to you a curtain between you and God.  
Cast fire on them both:  
How long, because of these twain,  
will you be full of knots like a reed (*nay*)?  
While the reed (*nay*) is knotted,  
it is not a sharer of secrets:  
It is not the companion of the (flute player’s) lip and voice.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:2201–3; cf. MJR2 pp.119–20*

The perfect Saint becomes a well-made flute held to the Mouth of God. The Breath of God plays sweet music through him. Rūmī says that the words

spoken outwardly by the perfect Saint are directly connected to the unspoken Word or Breath of God within:

This is only the wailful music that he has uttered;  
 As for that which is hidden within him,  
     have mercy, O Lord!  
 We have two vocal mouths,  
     like the reed (*nay*): one mouth is hidden in his lips.  
 One mouth is wailing unto you:  
     it lets a shrill note fall on the air;  
 But every one who has insight knows  
     that the lamentation issuing at *this* end  
     is inspired from *that* end.  
 The noise of this reed (*nāy*) is from His Breaths:  
     the spirit's outcry is from His Outcry.  
 If the reed had no converse with His lip,  
     the reed would not fill the world with sugar.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:2001–6, MJR6 pp.369–70*

In an unusual image, Rūmī depicts a Saint as riding on a *nai*. Here, Rūmī shows the deliberate concealment (*kitmān*) of the Saints: the Saint hides his power, living like a normal human being though permeated within by the divine Music, riding his *nai* as if it were a child's toy, so to speak, "among the children" of this world:

Look, there is so-and-so:  
 Mounted on a cane (*nai*),  
     he rides (it as a cockhorse) among the children.  
 He is possessed of judgment,  
     keen as a spark of fire;  
 He is as the sky in dignity,  
     and as the stars in high estate.  
 His glory has become the soul of the cherubim;  
 He has become concealed in the madness (of this world).

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:2340–42; cf. MJR2 p.342*

In Muslim legend, the original *nāy* came from the well where 'Alī, the quint-essential disciple, struggled to contain the love and pain of separation surging within him. 'Alī leaned into the well, and confided the secrets of the Prophet's mystic teaching. A reed grew up in the bottom of that well, and was fashioned into the first shepherd's reedpipe. Rūmī speaks of the struggle to conceal the anguish and love of mystic experience:



When I wish to sigh forth Thy secret,  
like 'Alī I put my head down into a well.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:2014, MJR6 p.370*

Putting the head into a well is an image for holding the attention within, in the *dil*, the spiritual heart, where mystic experience, love and the anguish of separation continue to grow only stronger.

The flute in various forms is an ancient instrument, common to practically all cultures, appearing in seemingly symbolic form in religious mythology. According to an ancient Chinese legend, for instance, the first music was played on small pieces of reed: with holes cut into the reed at the distance of two fingers, the first music came into being. In the Hindu tradition, Kṛiṣṇa also plays on a flute. In ancient Greek tradition, Pan – the god of fields, woods, shepherds and flocks – is also portrayed with a flute.

See also: **baṃsarī**, **flute**, **muralī**.

**neginah** (He) *Lit.* music, melody, song.

See **Song**.

**niggun** (He) *Lit.* music, melody, song.

See **Song**.

**panj nawbat** (P) *Lit.* five (*panj*) changes (*nawbat*); the five changings of the guard, executed with a musical fanfare; sometimes used as a reference to the five divine Sounds or the sounds associated with each of five spiritual regions.

See **nawbat**.

**rabāb** (A/Pu), **rubāb** (P) *Lit.* rebec, a two- or three-stringed medieval instrument played with a bow, like a violin; in Sufi writings, symbolic of the cry, “Return!”, voiced by God to summon the wayfarer home.

The exhortation, “*Irjiʿi* (Return)!”, is derived from the *Qurʾān*: “Return to your Lord, content in his good pleasure.”<sup>1</sup> In this verse, the soul is beckoned back to God and the garden of heaven. Mystically, God’s call of “Return!” is the Voice of God (*Āvāz-i Khudā*) or Speech of God (*Kalām*

*Allāh*) that is contacted within during spiritual practice. It is the *Nagmah* (Music, Melody) heard with the inner faculty of hearing. “Return!” reflects the magnetic character of this Music, drawing the soul inward and upward, back towards God. Once heard, this Music transforms and transports the soul as no religious recitation or intellectual interpretation of theology can. Thus Ḥāfiẓ writes:

How wide the gulf between the priest’s sermon  
and the rebec’s (*rubāb*) refrain!

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.7, DHM (5:2) p.38, DIH p.38; cf. in SSEI p.168*

He also says that his head, his “pot”, is full of the divine Music, and that this has led him to realize that “the whole world is a mirage”. The “water pool” is the Water of Life, the creative Power, within:

Seek no counsel from my brain:  
This pot is full  
of the hum of the harp and the rebec (*rubāb*)!  
Your path! What a path it is!  
With awe I see the all-encompassing ocean of the sky  
to be only a mirage (in comparison).  
Green are the (inner) valley and the plain.  
Come! Let us not remove our hand from the water pool,  
for the whole world is a mirage.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHM (57:8–10) p.85, DIH p.100; cf. DHA p.41, DHWC (48:7–9) .124*

As a result of Muslim influence, the rebec is known in India. Hence, Guru Arjun speaks of the “servant” – the disciple who has surrendered to his Master – as one who plays the rebec and “hears the divine Music”. As a result, his soul “dances and sings” in inward blissful worship and love:

Thy slave dances and sings Thine excellences:  
he plays upon the rebec (*rabāb*), tambourine, cymbals and anklets,  
and thus he hears the divine Music (*anhad Shabd*, unstruck Sound).

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 381, MMS*

1. *Qur’ān* 89:28.

**sārangī** (H) An Indian stringed instrument commonly used for the accompaniment of vocal music and dance of all kinds, particularly in northern India, and played with a bow. Usually constructed from toon or teak wood, the *sārangī* is about two feet long. The entire body of the instrument is hollow

and covered with skin, the sides being pinched to facilitate bowing. A bridge is placed centrally on the main body and four tuning pegs are fixed to the hollow head. Three of the pegs hold gut strings of varying thickness, while the fourth sometimes holds a brass string, used as a drone.

To play the *sārangī*, the player sits on the floor or a low stool. The main body of the instrument is placed in the lap or on the floor, with its head resting against the left shoulder. The strings are bowed with a horsehair bow held in the right hand, rather in the manner of a Western cello. Modern *sārangīs* generally have thirty-five to forty sympathetic strings running under the main strings, fastened to pegs on the top and right-hand side of the fingerboard.

The sound produced by the *sārangī* is said to be the closest of all instruments to the human voice. Indian mystics have likened its sound to that of the divine Music heard in the first spiritual realm that lies above the regions of the mind. Among other names, Kabīr calls this region, *sunm* and its ruler, *akshar Brahm*:

The music of the *kingrī*, *sārangī* and *sītār*  
play ceaselessly in the *sunm* of *akshar Brahm*.

*Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī 22:18, KSS1 p.66*

Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh writes in a similar vein.<sup>1</sup>

1. Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, *Sār Bachan Poetry* 6:7.3, 26:3.4, *SBP* pp.56, 227.

**shankh(a)** (S/H/Pu), **sankh** (Pu) A conch shell; used as musical instrument, the conch produces a deep, reverberating sound when blown in a particular manner. Regarded as a sacred instrument in India, the conch is used in Hindu temple ceremonies, where it is blown at various times throughout the day. Traditional Hindu families will normally own a *shankh*, and a *shankh* is carried by some Hindu gods and goddesses in one of their many hands. A full blast on the conch was also used to rally troops in time of war.

Mystically, the sound of the conch has been likened to the resounding of the Sound heard by the soul in the heavenly realms. Speaking of various inner realms, Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh places the sound of the *shankh* below that of *Onkāṛ*, heard in the realm of the universal mind, going on to mention the regions above – *sunm* (void), *bhanwar guphā* (rotating cave) and *sat lok* (true region):

Draw your soul inwards, and see the door (eye centre):  
On the right side is the Sound Current,  
on the left, the snare of *Kāl*.

Pass it by, holding the soul attentively.  
 Listen with love to the bell and conch (*shankh*),  
 and beyond that to the melody of *Onkā*.  
 Hear *rārankār* in *sun*  
 and the melodious strains of the flute in *bhanwar guphā*.  
 In *sat lok*, listen to the melody of the *bīn* (*vīṇā*).  
*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:4.17–21, SBP pp.90–91*

Likewise, Beṇī Jī, using the image of oriental fly whisks and regal music to convey the atmosphere of a royal court, writes:

The melody of the five pure Sounds (*pañch Shabd*) resounds there:  
 the fly brushes wave and the conches (*sankh*) thunder like clouds.  
*Beṇī Jī, Ādi Granth 974, MMS*

**Shepherd’s Pipe of Truth** A simple flute sometimes played by a Middle Eastern shepherd to call his sheep to him, perhaps so that he could lead them to new pastures or protect them from impending harm; the subject of an interesting poem found among the Mandaean texts, whose meaning is clearly allegorical and mystical. The pipe is described as the “Shepherd’s Pipe of Truth”, the Shepherd being a reference to the Saviour or spiritual Master. The “Pipe” is said to be the “Shepherd’s” because a soul only hears this divine Music through the grace and blessings of a Saviour. In this sense, the Music is his, to be given as he sees fit; it is his pipe to play to the sheep under his protection, and only they will follow him.

According to the poem, the effect of the music that the Shepherd plays is that the “door” into the heavenly realms is opened, “wicked” or sinful human beings become “good”, and the sleepers are awakened and “stirred to consciousness”. The “Good One” is the Word, as a Saviour:

The Good One set forth, and came into being,  
 and he took his lofty throne....  
 He took his Shepherd’s Pipe of Truth  
 that is filled with prayers and praise.

Once on a time, Good One,  
 I played thereon.  
 The door of the heavens opened!

A second time, Good One,  
 did I hymn therewith,  
 And all the wicked became good!

And a third time, Good One,  
 I hymned therewith.  
 All were stirred to consciousness  
 And they arose.

It said to them, "Rise up, come.  
 You sleepers who lie sleeping!  
 Arise, you erring ones who have stumbled!  
 Is not my rule hard upon you?  
 And does not my high lash fall heavy upon you?"

But they say to him, "By your life,  
 our Father, Son of the Life,  
 because of the radiance and light  
 you have brought with you,  
 your rule is not hard on us  
 nor does your high lash strike hardly upon us!"

*Mandaean Prayer Book 159; cf. CPM pp.136–37*

The discipline of the path of the Word is exacting, and disciples struggle to live up to its high demands. Yet the grace and blessings that fall upon sincere disciples are correspondingly great, far outweighing the effort required. Hence, they gladly say, "because of the radiance and the light you have brought with you, your rule is not hard on us!"

See also: **baṃsarī**, **flute**, **muralī**, **nāy**.

**shir**, **shirah** (He) *Lit.* psalm; song.

See **Song**.

**shofar** (He) *Lit.* a ram's horn, one of the earliest-known musical instruments; probably derived from *sapparu* (wild sheep); often translated as trumpet. In biblical times, the *shofar* was blown to evoke a sense of the awe of God's presence, as a signal and call to war, as a battle cry to frighten enemies, and at processions.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, it was used in conjunction with other instruments. The sounding of the *shofar* may have originated in magical practices intended to scare demons away, including Satan and evil spirits. On the Jewish New Year, the *shofar* is sounded as a call to repentance.

The first biblical mention is associated with the revelation of the *Torah*. According to the *Exodus* story, when Moses is called to Mount Sinai to

receive God's instructions, he hears the "Voice of the *shofar*". This "Voice", which becomes increasingly loud during Moses' revelation, is also heard by the children of Israel who were camped at the foot of the mountain. The "Voice" is the form in which God reveals Himself:<sup>2</sup>

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the sound of a *shofar* exceedingly loud; so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the lower part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount trembled greatly. And when the Voice of the *shofar* sounded long, and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a Voice.

*Exodus 19:16–19, JCL*

Understood allegorically, Mount Sinai symbolizes the inner heavens or eternity itself, from where the divine Word, Sound or Voice – the true inner *Torah* – projects itself into the creation. The sound of the *shofar* heard on Mount Sinai is the divine Sound of God's revelation, heard by Moses in the heavenly realms. The ritual sounding of the *shofar* symbolizes this mystic Voice of God.

The sound of the *shofar* is also the signal heralding victory at the Battle of Jericho, as recounted in the biblical book of *Joshua*:

And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the *shofar*, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him. And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said to them, "Take the Ark of the Covenant, and let seven priests carry seven *shofarot* of rams' horns before the Ark of the Lord."

*Joshua 6:5–6, JCL*

Mystically, the destruction of the walls of Jericho at the "sound of the *shofar*" and the shouting of the Israelites can be viewed as symbolic of the power of God's Word or Sound removing inner obstacles on the spiritual path. On the Jewish New Year, psalm forty-seven is recited seven times before the sounding of the *shofar*. This symbolizes both the seven circuits made by the Israelites around Jericho before the wall fell down at the "sound of the *shofar*", as well as the seven heavens through which prayers must penetrate in order to reach the throne of God:<sup>3</sup>

O clap your hands, all you peoples:  
 shout to God with the voice of triumph.  
 For the Lord most high is awesome:  
 He is a great King over all the earth....  
 God has gone up with a shout,  
 the Lord with the sound of a *shofar*.  
 Sing praises to God, sing praises:  
 sing praises to our King, sing praises.

*Psalm 47:2–7, JCL*

The medieval *Zohar*, which became the most important work of the mystical movement of the Kabbalah, supports the allegorical interpretation, identifying the sound of the *shofar* as symbolizing the Voice of God, the creative Power, at the time of the creation:

With this energy (Wisdom), God created the heavens; it is a hidden point, the waters of which flow forth, producing therefrom a Voice which is called the Voice of the *shofar*. Hence it says, “God created the heavens,” to wit, the Voice of the *shofar*.

*Zohar 1:29b; cf. ZSS1 p.112, JCL*

And similarly:

According to Rabbi Simeon, the “Voice of the trumpet (*shofar*)” is the “Word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord”,<sup>4</sup> by which “man lives”. It is greater and stronger than all lower voices. On it depends all; it is called “great Voice”, and also a “still thin Voice”,<sup>5</sup> *i.e.* a clear though tiny light which illumines all things, but a “still Voice” also because men must be filled with awe and silence to hear it.

*Zohar 2:81b, ZSS3 pp.244–45, JCL*

According to *Numbers* and *Leviticus*, the *shofar* is to be sounded on *Rosh ha-Shannah* (the New Year).<sup>6</sup> The practice has evolved over time, and nowadays the *shofar* is sounded during almost the entire month of *Elul* (the month preceding the New Year), on the New Year itself, and on the Day of Atonement, which follows ten days after the New Year. The purpose of sounding the *shofar* on these ‘High Holy Days’ is to call the people to repent for their sins, and to evoke an atmosphere of awe.

The *Zohar* provides a mystical explanation of this practice. It teaches that the sounding of the physical *shofar* on the New Year awakens an inner, “supernal *Shofar*” – the “Voice” by which “God created the heavens” – which until then is withdrawn or “removed”. While it is withdrawn, the power of Judgment reigns. But on the New Year, the souls of the people are

crying for mercy – for God’s total unqualified love. By blowing the *shofar*, they awaken the “supernal *Shofar*” of the heavenly realms which brings down mercy and love. Just as the origins of sounding the *shofar* may have been to scare evil spirits away, so the sounding of the *shofar* on the New Year symbolically frightens away the ‘prosecuting attorney’, as the divine Judge is called.

The sounding of the *shofar* takes the form of a particular sequence of sounds, the entire sequence being repeated three times. The repetition of this sequence is believed to produce corresponding sounds in the heavenly realms, referred to as a series of “supernal *shofars*”, which signify various spiritual levels. The *Zohar* symbolically identifies these levels with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Abraham represents the quality of overflowing divine love and mercy, which corresponds to the *sefirah* (divine emanation) of *Hesed* (love, grace, mercy). Isaac, Abraham’s son, corresponds to divine Judgment and revenge, the law of cause and effect, represented by the *sefirah* of *Din* (Judgment). He embodies the divine Judge. Jacob represents the *sefirah* of *Tiferet* (Splendour, Beauty), which harmonizes the qualities of Mercy and Judgment. Jacob also represents the Lord, as *Yahweh*:

Rabbi Abba, as he was once studying with Rabbi Simeon, said to him: “Many times have I inquired concerning the significance of the *shofar*, but I have never yet received a satisfactory answer.”

Rabbi Simeon replied: “The true explanation ... why Israel have to use a ram’s horn (*shofar*) on this day and not any other is this, that we know to what place the horn belongs, and we do not desire to awaken Judgment. For, as we have learnt, by word and deed we have to awaken secret powers. Now when the supernal *Shofar*, in which is the illumination of all, removes itself and does not shine upon the sons, then Judgment is awakened and the thrones are set up for Judgment, and Isaac (the divine Judge) strengthens and prepares himself for Judgment.

“But when this *Shofar* rouses itself, and men repent of their sins, it behoves them to blow the *shofar* below (on earth), and the sound thereof ascends on high and awakens another supernal *Shofar*, and so Mercy is awakened and Judgment is removed. We must produce from this *shofar* below various sounds to arouse all the voices that are contained in the supernal *Shofar*, and therefore we not only use the *shofar* on this day, but arrange the blasts in a number of series.”

*Zohar* 3:99a–99b, ZSS5 p.125, JCL

Rabbi Simeon then describes this series of blasts:



“With the first blast, the voice goes forth and makes its way upwards to the firmaments, breaking through lofty mountains till it reaches Abraham, on whose head it rests so that he awakes and prepares himself for the throne.... Then there goes up a second mighty blast to break down wrath, being itself of broken notes, and all chastisements that stand in its way as it ascends to Isaac are broken. Then Isaac awakens and beholds Abraham preparing the throne and standing before it, and then he also is chastened and his severity is abated.”

*Zohar 3:99b, ZSS5 p.125, JCL*

Rabbi Simeon then goes on to urge the blower of the *shofar* to concentrate his mind in order “to break the strength of stern Judgment (symbolized by Isaac)”. Then the sound of the third blast, he says, ascends and breaks open the “firmaments”, till it reaches the level of Jacob’s head, who awakens and sees Abraham on the other side. At this, Abraham takes hold of Isaac and restrains him from committing any acts of violence or punishment. This is the end of the first series.

In the first blast of the second series, the sound ascends and takes hold of Abraham and places him in the midst of the place where the harshness of Isaac (Judgment) prevails. At the sound of the second blast, which is not as strong as the first, the powers of Judgment see Abraham among them and are humbled. From the sound of the third blast issues a voice, which rises and forms a crown on the head of Jacob, whom it brings to the level where the powers of Judgment prevail. Abraham faces these powers on one side and Jacob on the other, and they thus become more lenient because they are kept between Jacob and Abraham. This is the end of the second series.

The third and last series returns Abraham and Jacob to their original places, with Isaac between them, a position that softens his violent mood. Hence, Rabbi Simeon concludes:

“All punishments are kept in check, and Mercy is awakened. This is the purpose which these blasts should serve, being accompanied by repentance before God.

“Thus when Israel produce the blasts of the *shofar* with proper devotion, the supernal *Shofar* returns and crowns Jacob so that all is properly arranged. Another throne is set up and joy is universally diffused, and God has mercy on the world. Happy are Israel who know how to divert their Master from Justice to Mercy and to be the instruments for establishing all worlds.”

*Zohar 3:100a–b, ZSS5 p.126, JCL*

The Zohar’s allegorical tale of the sounding of the *shofar* on earth awakening the “supernal *Shofar*” is possibly a hint to a deeper meaning: In order to

evoke God's forgiveness and truly repent of his sins, the individual needs to bring himself in tune with the divine creative "*Shofar*" that reverberates within himself.

See also: **singī**.

1. *Numbers* 10:1–10.
2. *Exodus* 19:1–25.
3. "Shofar", in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, EJCD.
4. *Deuteronomy* 8:3.
5. *1 Kings* 19:12.
6. *Numbers* 10:1–10, 29:1; *Leviticus* 23:24, 25:9.

**singī** (H/Pu) A small Indian horn; a long, more or less conical musical instrument ending in a bell and with a funnel-shaped mouthpiece; also called *sīng*, *sīngī* and *sīngā*. This ancient instrument was used to signal the commencement of some event, religious or secular, and was played at ceremonial dances, festivals and so on. Traditionally, the *singī* was made out of the horn of a deer, a buffalo or even a cow, though in later and modern times it has come to be made of brass. Nowadays, various types of *singī* are used in temple worship, processions, marriages and so forth, some even reaching a length of six feet and comprised of four or five interlocking brass tubes. Shapes include straight, curved, S-shaped and many other variants. The tone produced is shrill and cannot really be described as musical. Little attempt has ever been made to use the *singī* in real music – folk, popular or classical.

A small *singī* is played by some groups of yogis and ascetics. Mystics point out that the real *singī* is the inner Sound, and external music cannot awaken consciousness of that. Hence, addressing the practitioners of *yoga*, Guru Nānak writes:

*Yoga* is not in the patched coat, nor *yoga* is in the staff,  
 nor *yoga* is in smearing the body with ashes.  
*Yoga* consists not in earrings, or in shaven head,  
 and *yoga* not even in the blowing of the *singī*...  
 Nānak, in the midst of life be thou in death:  
 practise thou such a *yoga*.  
 When the horn blows without being blown,  
 then shalt thou obtain the fearless status.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 730, MMS*

Guru Nānak is speaking to the wandering *sādhus* of India who live as beggars, announcing their presence by the blowing of the *singī*, when he writes

that the true herald of the soul is the inner Sound or Word (*Shabd*), and the true alms are the Lord's Name:

The Lord's meditation and the Guru's instruction (*Shabd*, Word)  
 is the music of my *singī*, which the people hear.  
 Honour is my bowl for begging,  
 and I long to have the alms of the Lord's Name (Nām).

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 877, MMS*

He also says that the mind ceases all its wanderings when it hears the sound of the *singī* (*singī shabd*) within:

He forsakes desires and disputes,  
 and sits in contemplative mood in the Lord's city.  
 From the *singī shabd*,  
 an everlasting and beautiful Melody (*Dhun*) is produced,  
 which day and night,  
 fills him with divine Music (*pūrā Nād*, sublime Sound).

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 360, MMS*

And speaking of those who have been liberated through the *Guru's* Word, he speaks of the unstruck Melody of the *singī*:

He overwhelms his desire, enshrines the Lord within his mind,  
 and reflects on the true *Guru's* Word (*Shabd*).  
 Within him spontaneously (*anāhad*, unstruck)  
 rings the *singī* of divine knowledge,  
 and he sees Thy light amongst all the hearts, O Lord.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 907, MMS*

See also: **shofar**.

**sitār** (H/Pu), **sihtar** (P) *Lit.* three-stringed; a north Indian stringed musical instrument, generally used for playing Indian classical music; thought to have arisen as a result of the fusion of North Indian culture with that of their Muslim invaders. Court patronage and entertainment included dance and musical entertainment, and the foreign invaders needed to hear music which was familiar to them.

The invention of the *sitār* is traditionally attributed to Amīr Khusrau, a great court musician and statesman of thirteenth-century Delhi who, in trying to improve upon the *vīṇā*, is said to have ended up with the *sitār*. Some modern scholars, however, are dubious of the traditional story. They point

out that Amīr Khusrau does not mention the instrument in his writings, which is surprising if he really was the inventor. Moreover, the Persian name of the instrument, the *sihtar*, existed prior to his time.

The *sitār* is the most popular and versatile of Indian musical instruments. It has a neck about three feet long and three inches wide fixed to a rounded body, traditionally made of half a gourd. Movable frets, secured to the fingerboard by pieces of gut, permit the instrument to be tuned according to the *rāga* (a pattern of melody and rhythm) being played. The main strings are three to seven in number, overlying eleven or twelve sympathetic strings fixed to pegs on the side of the fingerboard and tuned to the scale of the melody being played. The player sits in the cross-legged position and strikes the strings with a wire plectrum worn on the forefinger of the right hand.

The music of the inner realms, in particular that of the spiritual realm immediately above that of the universal mind, has been likened to that of the *sitār*. Among other names, Kabīr calls this region, *sun*n and its ruler, *akshar Brahm*:

The music of the *kingrī*, *sārangī* and *sitār*  
play ceaselessly in the *sun*n of *akshar Brahm*.

*Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī 22:18, KSS1 p.66*

**Song(s), Songs of Deliverance, Song of Sweetness** Terms sometimes used by mystics in reference to the divine music of the Word of God. There are a great many instances in the world's mystic and sacred literature where the writers speak of singing praises or hymns to the Lord or of angels doing likewise. Many of these are probably allusions to listening to the divine Song or the divine Music. It is not the outer voices, but the soul that sings within, metaphorically, in great joy, on hearing the heavenly Melody.

External music can focus the mind, letting it forget the many worries and cares that create distress and unhappiness. But when the music stops, then the disturbances reappear in the mind. The divine Music, on the other hand, draws the soul out of the body into higher realms, altogether removing it from the sphere of material concerns. It is sweeter than any music of this world; it plays unceasingly, and has an attractive beauty of which the mind and soul never tire.

In the biblical *Psalms*, a number of terms are used to refer to this divine Music. These include *shir*, *shirah*, *mizmor* and *zimrah* – all meaning song or psalm – and *neginah*, meaning music. These terms all have a mundane meaning and, when used as allusions to the divine Music, the meaning is often ambiguous. This may have been the intention of the psalmist.

In one of the psalms, for instance, the psalmist speaks of his experience of God's love by day, while at night God's "Song" is upon his lips:

By day the Lord will command His lovingkindness,  
and in the night His Song (*Shir*) shall be with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.

*Psalms 42:9, JCL*

This does not refer to an all-night session of hymn singing, but to nightly prayer of a mystic character. This meaning is underlined in another psalm where the psalmist speaks explicitly of remembering the “Song” throughout the night, in inner communion with his “spirit”:

I call to remembrance my Song (*Neginah*) in the night:  
I meditate with my heart,  
and my spirit makes diligent search.

*Psalms 77:7, KB*

From the same Judaic tradition as the psalms come the songs of praise and thanksgiving found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Here, the writer echoes the refrain from the psalms of meditating “all day long”, pledging himself to “sing Thy mercies”:

I will sing Thy mercies,  
and on Thy might I will meditate all day long.  
I will bless Thy Name evermore.  
I will declare Thy glory in the midst of the sons of men  
and my soul shall delight in Thy great goodness.  
I know that Thy Word is Truth,  
and that righteousness is in Thy hand.

*Thanksgiving Hymns XIX:5–10 (21), CDSS p.288*

Allusions and explicit references to the mystic Song are also found in early Christian literature. There is an interesting passage in the *Assumption of the Virgin*, a legendary and miraculous account of the death of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Its interest lies in the nature of the oral traditions and written sources used by this unknown writer of antiquity. The author speaks of the “Voice”, the “great Melody”, the “Sound of great Sweetness”, the “Song of Sweetness” and the “sweet Melody with which no man can be sated”. These would seem to be references to the inner Music, though the conveyor of this legend, drawing expressions and imagery from early Christian tradition, may not have fully understood them. According to the story, at the death of his mother, Jesus appears to take her soul:

The Saviour spoke, saying, “Come most precious Pearl, enter into the treasury of eternal life.” ...

Thereafter, Peter lifted up the head of the body and began to sing, saying: “Israel is come out of Egypt.” ...

And the rest of the apostles sang with exceedingly sweet voices, ... and a host of angels ... sent forth a Song of Sweetness, and the earth resounded with the noise of that great Melody.

Then the people came out of that city, about fifteen thousand, and marvelled and said: “What is this Sound of great Sweetness?”

Then there stood one and told them: “Mary is gone out of the body, and the disciples of Jesus are singing praises about her.” ...

And the Lord spread forth his unstained hands and received her holy and spotless soul. And at the going forth of her spotless soul, the place was filled with sweet odour and light unspeakable. And lo, a Voice from heaven was heard....

And a great fragrance came from that place ... in paradise, and a Melody of them that praised him that was born of her. And unto virgins (pure souls) only is it given to hear that sweet Melody with which no man can be sated.

*Assumption of the Virgin VII, XI:2, XII:1–2, 46, 49; cf. ANT pp.212, 213–14, 208–9*

Among the Manichaean writings, the use of the metaphor is more explicit. Here, the hearing of such songs is clearly related to experience of the inner heavens, as in a description which says that in those blissful realms:

All is filled with happiness  
and sweet delightful song.

*Manichaean Hymns, Huwīdagmān I:60, MHCP pp.74–75*

Likewise, in another Manichaean passage:

The chariots of light are the gate to the (eternal) kingdom:  
joyful is the song that sounds from them.

*Manichaean Hymns, MM3 p.887ff., RMP bj; cf. GSR p.57:3.2, ML p.140*

The “chariots of light” are the soul’s conveyance to eternity. But they are a vehicle of both light and sound, for “joyful is the song that sounds from them”. The allusion is to the divine Music, which draws the soul to its true, eternal home.

In ancient, as in modern times, people gather round a musician and listen to his songs. Hence, another Manichaean text speaks of the Saviour as:

(He) who in songs is sweeter  
than the minstrels (of this world).

*Manichaean Text, MH p.28 (n.7), ML p.37*

Disciples are never lacking in praise for their Master, and in another psalm the Saviour is described as the perfect or “faultless Youth” around whom there is “music of songs from all sides”, implying the all-encompassing experience of being filled with the ecstasy of the inner, life-giving Music. The Master is also called the Friend and the “Prince, son of a King”. All of creation, within and without, sings and dances to the Music and Song of the real Master, the Sound of Life:

Tambourine, harp and flute sounded,  
music of songs from all sides.  
All the gods were before you,  
O Prince, son of a King (God).  
Voices sound from the unbegotten Air (Spirit),  
music of songs from the land of light.  
*Manichaean Hymns, GMU p.306ff., RMP at; cf. ML p.120*

See also: **divine Music**.

**squbrā** (Md) A wind instrument like a primitive flute, used by Mandaean fishermen. The term appears in the Mandaean allegory of the Fisher of souls. When the “Chief Fisher” (the Master or Saviour) makes music on his *squbrā*, his divine “Call” (the Word) sounds “in the marsh” (the world), warning his “fish” (his souls) about the forces of negativity, symbolized here as “foul-smelling birds” and the “great *sidmā*” – presumably some kind of heron, fish eagle or other predatory fish-eating bird:

When the Chief Fisher,  
the head of the race of the Living,  
the highest of all catchers of fish,  
heard this, he said ...  
“Bring me my ... *squbrā*,  
that I may make a Call sound forth in the marsh,  
that I may warn the fish of the depths,  
and scare away the foul-smelling birds  
that pursue my fish.  
I will catch the great *sidmā*,  
and tear off his wings on the spot.  
I will ... blow into my *squbrā*.  
A true *squbrā* it is,  
so that the water may not mix with pitch.”

*Mandaean John-Book, JMM pp.146–47; cf. GJB p.73, JM p.147*

Because of its haunting tones of longing, the flute has long been used as a symbol of the divine Music. In the allegory, the flute is also called the “true *squbrā*”, underlining its metaphorical significance. It makes the music which keeps the pure water of the Chief Fisher’s disciples away from the cloying black “pitch” of the world.

See also: **baṃsari, flute, murali, nāy.**

**tāl(a)** (S/H/Pu) Beating time (in music); clapping hands; rhythm; a musical time or measure, as in the various complex rhythms which underlie the *rāgas* of Indian classical music; also, cymbals. The inner music of the divine Sound is sometimes said to sound like the clashing of cymbals (*tāla*), as in a list of ten sounds given in the *Haṃsa Upanishad*:

The sixth is the sound of cymbals (*tāla*).

*Haṃsa Upanishad* 16; cf. *TMU* pp.163, 299

And in the *Ādi Granth*:

This soul of mine dances before the true *Guru*, and within me  
resounds  
the tune of the celestial music of the Name (*anhad Shabd Dhun tūr*).  
Placing, placing my feet with the beating of time (*tāl*),  
day and night sing I the praise of the Lord-Master-God.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth* 834–35, *MMS*

And, according to Dayābāi:

The big bell (*ghaṇṭā*) resounds  
to the rhythm (*tāl*) and sound of the *mṛidang*,  
and the continuous thundering of clouds.  
Rare is the *sādhū* who hears it  
with the grace of the *Guru*, O Dayā.

*Dayābāi, Bānī, Ajapā* 16, *DBB* p.11

**tambourine** A percussion instrument consisting of a single skin or drumhead stretched over a circular wooden frame from which pairs of metal discs are hung which jingle when struck or shaken. An instrument sometimes used as a likeness to the divine Music, as in a Manichaeon hymn which describes the heavenly regions:



Tambourine, harp and flute sounded,  
music of songs from all sides.

*Manichaeon Hymns, GMU p.306ff., RMP at, ML p.120*

See also: **daff**.

**tantrī** (S/H) *Lit.* string; the lute; a stringed musical instrument that originated in the Middle East, and has spread throughout the world in various forms, the guitar being the commonest variant in the West. The Sound heard in the inner realms has been likened to that of a lute by many Middle Eastern mystics, and is found from time to time among the writings of Indian mystics, as in the *Haṃsa Upanishad* in a list of ten sounds heard within:

The fifth (is like) that of a *tantrī*.

*Haṃsa Upanishad 16; cf. TMU pp.163, 299*

See also: **lute**, **ūd**.

**teru'ah** (He) *Lit.* shout; hence, joyful sound; one of the sounds made by the *shofar* (ram's horn) when blown in the synagogue; mystically, it probably signifies the divine Sound or Music, symbolized by the *shofar*, as in one of the psalms, where "Hand" and "Right Hand" are both metaphors for the creative Power:

You have a mighty arm:

strong is Your Hand, and high is your Right Hand.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne:

love and truth shall go before You.

Happy is the people who know the joyful Sound (*teru'ah*):

they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance.

*Psalm 89:14–16, JCL*

See also: **shofar**.

**T'ien Lài (Tiān Lài)** (C) *Lit.* Piping (*Lài*) of Heaven (*T'ien*); heavenly piping; transcendent sounds. The *lài* was an ancient instrument like a vertical flute, and the sound from such a pipe or any other cavity was later also called *lài*. Hence, the term *sān lài* (*lit.* three pipings), which refers to all sounds that belong to Heaven, Earth and man. Ethereal sounds experienced by the mystic

were known as *T'iēn Lài*, whereas the piping of Earth, *Tì lài* (wind, waves, etc.), and the pipings of man, *jén lài* (physical sounds made by man), belong to the physical creation.

See also: **divine Music (Taoism), hsī Yīn.**

**trumpet** A valved, brass instrument with a clear and powerful sound, consisting of a narrow tube with a flared open end; one of the instruments used by ancient Middle Eastern mystical writers in descriptions of the divine Music. In one of the Manichaean psalms, for instance, the soul is drawn up out of the body into the inner realms through the sound of the “trumpet”, calling her to the realms of immortality:

Save me, O blessed Christ,  
Saviour of holy souls.  
I will pass up into the skies (inner realms),  
and leave this body upon the earth.  
The trumpet sounds, I hear,  
they are calling me up to the immortals.  
I will cast away my body upon the earth  
from which it was assembled.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXI; cf. MPB p.75*

In another psalm, the divine Music is described as “your ... holy trumpet sounding summer and winter”. This again carries the soul “far from the world” and its attachments, signified by “my parents”. The soul ascends to God, beyond both the earth and all the inner heavens:

When I hear the Cry of your ... holy trumpet  
sounding summer and winter ... I follow you.  
I betook myself far from the world,  
I left my parents, I passed unto the Lord,  
who is greater than heaven and earth.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXXIII; cf. MPB p.93*

And in a paean of praise to Mānī, a psalmist finds many ways to describe the great gift bestowed by all Masters upon their disciples. Primarily, he is the “Paraclete”, the intercessor, who has the power to forgive all sins. He is the Physician who gives the “Medicine of Life” to “heal the (spiritually) wounded”. He is the divine Light who lights the “lamps” of the souls who through faith in him are enabled to “put oil into them” – to practise meditation; for it is meditation which puts light into a soul. He is also the

“Helmsman” who guides the ship of the soul through the vast ocean of creation:

Our Lord the Paraclete has come....  
 let us all pray, my brethren,  
 that he may forgive us our sins.

He gave into his hands the Medicine of Life  
 that he might heal the (spiritually) wounded.  
 He gave light with his light to our lamps:  
 put oil into them by your faith.  
 He gave the Helmsman to the ships,  
 the butter he brought to the warm milk.  
 He gave the Bread of Life to the hungry,  
 the clothing he brought to the naked.  
 He gave light by his love to our soul (*nous*),  
 he made his faith shine in our mind.  
 He brought perfection to our thought,  
 long-suffering to our counsel.  
 He bestowed Wisdom on our intention,  
 that it might be as butter for us.  
 He sounded with his trumpet:  
 in the worlds that are far,  
 that are near, he roused them.

*Manichaeon Psalm Book CCXXVIII; cf. MPB pp.22–23*

Of all these gifts, it is the sound of “his trumpet in the worlds that are far” and “near” – the inner realms – with which the poet chooses to conclude the psalm.

See also: **nafīrī**, **Kol** (3.1), **shofar**.

**tūrya** (S), **turhī** (H), **tūr** (Pu) An ancient form of crude Indian wind instrument made of thin pieces of brass or copper sheet, producing a loud and harsh sound; once used on Hindu ceremonial occasions such as religious festivals, marriages, going into battle and so on; no longer used in modern times. The instrument belongs to the same family as the *bherī*.

The instrument appears in a Punjabi expression, ‘playing the *tūr*’, which means enjoying complete freedom of thought and action. Some Indian mystics have also compared the sound of *trikuṭī* to that of a *tūr*, and Kabīr has combined both these meanings in one of his poems. His theme is the efficacy of *simran* (remembrance) – mental repetition of names or words to bring the mind into concentration upon the Divine:

Remembering (*simran*) Whom,  
 thou shalt obtain the gate of emancipation (*mukat*),  
 go to the true abode and return not to this world (*saṃsār*).  
 Play the *tūr* in the house of the fearless Lord,  
 and the unstruck Strain (*Anhad*, the Unstruck)  
 shall ever fully resound for thee.  
 Embrace thou such meditation (*simran*, remembrance)  
 within thy mind.  
 Without the Lord's contemplation (*simran*),  
 salvation (*mukat*) can never be attained.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 971, MMS*

And Guru Arjun says:

Meditating on the perfect *Guru*, all affairs are perfected:  
 all desires are fulfilled.  
 And the *anhad tūr* (unblown *tūr*) blows within man.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 629, MMS*

See also: **bherī**.

**‘ūd** (A/P) *Lit.* lute; mystically, an allusion to the divine Music. In Sufi poetry, the *Sāqī*, symbolizing the spiritual Master, serves the wine of intoxicating spiritual bliss to the mystic wayfarers. Because the spiritual Master also brings the mystic seekers into contact with the divine Sound, the Sufi poet calls on the “*Sāqī*” to play his “lute” while serving this “wine” (bliss):

O *Sāqī*, serve up the wine, take down the lute (‘*ūd*),  
 and play your melody for just one breath, one moment,  
 at a crescendo.

*Mir’āt-i ‘Ushshāq, in TAT p.191, in FNII p.128; cf. in SSE1 p.169*

See also: **chang**, **lute**, **tantrī**.

**vīṇā** (S/H/Pu), **bīn** (H), **bīnā** (H/Pu), **bīṇā**, **bīṇ**, **ben** (Pu) A stringed musical instrument, considered to be the oldest of Indian classical instruments, even mentioned in the *Yajur Veda*. The modern *vīṇā* consists of a hollow (and thus resonant) bamboo fret board about 22 inches long and 2½ inches wide, on which 19 to 24 immovable frets are mounted, fixed securely in beeswax or an equivalent resinous substance. Four main strings and three side strings are strung on the fret board. The 24 frets, one per semitone, give a range of two octaves.

There are some differences between the *vīṇās* played in northern and southern India. The northern *vīṇā* is mounted on two large gourds or resonance boxes, of the same size, one at either end. The instrument is then held diagonally across the body of the player, who sits cross-legged on the floor, with one gourd resting either on the ground or on the right knee, with the other over the opposite shoulder. The strings are plucked with the fingers of the right hand, curled around the fret board, as with a guitar.

In southern India, the fret board and right-hand resonance box are carved out of wood, commonly jackwood, while a smaller gourd is fixed to the other end. The main body of the instrument rests on the ground, partially supported by the right thigh, while the smaller gourd on the left is placed on the left thigh. The instrument is played as before.

There are a number of variants on these two themes and the *vīṇā* has had an ancient history in Indian classical music. In modern times, few players remain, probably because the instrument demands great skill. Moreover, the *vīṇā* has been largely overshadowed by the *sitār*, first introduced in the thirteenth century.

The *vīṇā* (pron. *veenaa*) is not to be confused with the snake charmer's pipe, the *bīn* (pron. *been*), although in northern India the *vīṇā* is also sometimes confusingly called the *bīn* (pron. *been*), especially in times past. Even in present times, *vīṇā* players are traditionally known as *bīnkārs* (*bīn* players).

Traditional Indian lore attributes the invention of the *vīṇā* to the gods. The more popular legend ascribes it to the god *Shiva*, although another gives the credit to *Brahmā*, and another to Ṛishi Nārada. 'Ināyat Khān, himself a *vīṇā* player, tells the story in his own way. *Shiva*, he recalls, is revered as the lord of the yogis, the first ascetic and the master of *mantras* and *prāṇāyāma* (yogic practices):

(But) then he wanted to make some instrument to be used for higher exaltation through music. In the forest, he cut a piece of bamboo. He then took two pumpkins, hollowed them out and tied them on to the bamboo. He made gut strings from animals and these he tied on to the instrument; in this way he made his first *vīṇā*, and he practised on it in the solitude....

*Mahādev* (*Shiva*) made his instrument as a help for the human body and mind, considering its condition in the morning, in the midst of the day, in the afternoon, in the night and when waking at dawn. He found that at every time of the day and night a particular effect was made upon the human body and spirit, and that a rhythm akin to that particular time should be prescribed psychologically and mystically in order to elevate the soul. And therefore a psychological science of music was made by *Mahādev*, a science which was called

*rāga*, which means emotion – emotion controlled and used to the best purpose.

When his consort *Pārvatī* saw this instrument, she said, “I must invent *my vīṇā*.” So she took halves of the pumpkins and produced another kind of *vīṇā*, the *Sarasvatī vīṇā*. So there are two *vīṇās*; one is played by men, the other by women. On this latter instrument not only sharp and flat notes are produced, but also microtones, and in this way the music becomes rich. But to develop the science of microtones is so difficult that it takes a lifetime....

*Vīṇā* music is very much like the human voice. If you heard the *vīṇā* played, you would never think that it is an instrument. *Vīṇā* music is not as magnetic as the music of the human voice, but it is more attractive, more impressive; and all the delicacies of the human voice and its silky structure are perfected in the sound of the *vīṇā*.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 pp.103–5*

Speaking of the concentration of mind produced by listening to the sweet sounds of the earthly *vīṇā*, ‘Ināyat Khān says:

The *vīṇā* is especially constructed to concentrate the vibrations; as it gives a faint sound, sometimes only audible to the player, it is used in meditation.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 p.56*

He also speaks of the deep emotional and mental effect of the *vīṇā* when well played:

In India, there are *vīṇā* players who do not need to play a symphony in order to exert an influence, in order to produce a spiritual phenomenon. They only have to take the *vīṇā* in their hand and strike one note. As soon as they strike one note, it penetrates through and through; in striking one or two notes they have tuned the audience. The sound works on all the nerves; it is like playing on the lute which is in every heart. Their instrument becomes simply a source, the response to which is found in the heart of every person, friend and foe alike. Let the most antagonistic person come before a real *vīṇā* player, and he cannot keep his antagonism. As soon as the notes have touched that person, he cannot prevent the vibrations which are created in him, he cannot help becoming a friend. Therefore in India such players are often called, instead of musician, ‘*vīṇā* magician’. Their music is magic.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 p.136*

The vīṇā has something of a sacred status in Indian culture. 'Ināyat Khān again writes:

The Hindu goddess of beauty, of knowledge, whose name is *Sarasvatī*, is always pictured with the vīṇā. And what does it suggest? It suggests that all harmony has its essence in music. And besides the natural charm music possesses, it has also a magic charm that can be experienced even now. It seems that the human race has lost a great deal of the ancient science of magic but, if there remains any magic, it is music.

*'Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 pp.75–76*

Mythological accounts bear testimony to the vīṇā's use as a mystical symbol. Its music has been compared to *Praṇava*, a term used in the *Upanishads* for the divine Sound. Some stories even invest it with the power to take a person to *moksha* (liberation). Thus, the sage Yājñavalkya takes his wife Gārgī to *moksha*, but not his other wife Maitreyī, since the latter could attain *moksha* on her own to the accompaniment of the vīṇā, at which she was an expert.

However uplifting the music of the vīṇā, the sounds of this world cannot be expected to lift a soul out of this world. However fine, they are gross compared to the divine Sound. Unlike the divine Music, they are not unceasing. The Sound heard in the spiritual regions is inherently different from the sounds of this world, which are a crude reflection of the unstruck Sound.

Indian mystics have used the music of the vīṇā as a symbol of the nature of the unending, unstruck Music heard in the eternal realm, *sat lok* (true realm) or *sach khaṇḍ* (true region). Thus, Nāmdev (c.1270–1350) writes:

In the imperishable region of the formless Lord,  
I shall play the *anhad ben* (unstruck vīṇā).

*Nāmdev, Ādi Granth 972, MMS*

The mystic Kabīr also says:

There (in *sat lok*), pure souls (*haṃsas*, lit. swans)  
possess the radiance of sixteen suns.  
There resounds the incomparable melody of the vīṇā....  
This is the court of the true Lord (*Sat Purush*).

*Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī 22:25, KSSI p.67*

Similarly, Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh writes of the ascent to the eternal realm, crossing *bhanwar guphā* (rotating cave), the region immediately below:

I am the beloved of dear *Rādhā Swāmī*:  
 After crossing *bhanwar guphā*  
 I heard the resounding melody of the *vīṇā (bīn)*.  
*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 3:2.101, SBP p.18*

And:

From there (*bhanwar guphā*) the soul sped further on.  
 Reaching *sach khaṇḍ*,  
 it beheld the wonderful form of the true Lord (*Sat Purush*).  
 Listening to the melody of the *vīṇā (bīn)*, it is entranced:  
 the boundless grace is beyond all words.  
*Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 5:3.14–16, SBP p.46*

In the *Ādi Granth*, Guru Nānak says:

The *yogī* who plays on the *bīṇā* of God's Name (*Shabd*, Word)  
 sees the sight of the infinitely beautiful Lord.  
 Sayeth Nānak the meek, he is absorbed in the Lord  
 through the *anāhad Shabd* (unstruck Sound).  
*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 351, MMS*

And again:

*Gurbāṇī* (*Gur Shabd*, Word of the *Guru*) unites the mortal with God;  
 And then is he embellished,  
 and the *anhad bīṇā* (unstruck *vīṇā*) resounds within him.  
*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 767, MMS*

And Guru Arjun says:

My soul (*man*, mind) is absorbed  
 in the lovable devotional service of God:  
 Within me ever plays the *anhat bīṇā* (unstruck *vīṇā*).  
*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 622, MMS*

The same theme is echoed by Bhīkhā:

The sound of the *vīṇā (bīṇā)* rings in heaven,  
 where the supreme Lord has His throne.  
*Bhīkhā, Bānī 4:1–2, BSB p.19*



**voice of Wakan-Tanka** (Native North American) *Lit.* the sound or voice of the Great Spirit (*Wakan-Tanka*); an expression used by Frank Fools Crow (1891–1989), a Lakota (Sioux) holy man and ceremonial chief of the Teton Sioux. Fools Crow also describes many experiences in higher worlds, where he meets the “Helpers”, presumably spiritual beings. In the following passage, he seems to be speaking of the sounds of this world, as a part of the grand design of creation. But there is an overtone of something more spiritual in the way he describes them:

Everything that exists has a sound, and when things pass close by one another there is even a sound between them. This is how music comes into being. *Wakan-Tanka*, Grandmother Earth and the other Helpers use sound to communicate to us – sometimes in words, but more often to stir up our minds and hearts to think of spiritual things.

Grandmother Earth speaks to us through the drum. Rattles are the soft voice of *Wakan-Tanka* sending showers of blessings down to earth. Flutes are the many voices of the Persons in the Directions. Thunder is the powerful voice of the awesome cloud beings. It is the ears that rocks speak to first, and – through the ears – to the mind, spirit and heart. All of the beautiful sounds that exist or come into being are *Wakan-Tanka*’s creations, and like the other beautiful things He has made, He is a sucker for them. He can’t resist coming closer when we use them. We know He is there and sharing the experience with us.

*Fools Crow, in FCWP p.80*

**yhiapú guasuva** (AC) *Lit.* great sound; the great sound that is from the east; a term from the Avá-Chiripá people of South America. The term is used in a shaman’s account of how he received his shaman’s sacred chant: “*Yhiapú guasuva* (the great sound) is in the east and *Tupá* (a great deity) is in the west.”<sup>1</sup>

The Avá-Chiripá people’s most important ceremony, the *ñemboé kaagiŷy*, is held in a house which is entirely open to the east. They chant all night and are presumably facing the rising sun in the morning. They also locate their earthly paradise, the land without evil (*ywy mará ey*), in the east.

In mystical experience, sound and light are experienced inwardly. As mystical teachings devolve into religion, external symbols replace these inner realities. The sound from the east could originally have meant, and may still mean, an inner experience of the divine Sound ringing in the universe.

There is an abundance of evidence that the east symbolizes a sacred place to the Avá-Chiripá, and is associated with the emergence of both sound and light. This may extend to the indigenous Guaraní people in general, who locate the land without evil in the east.

1. Guaraní Shaman, in *SAC* p.128.

**zimrah** (He) *Lit.* song, psalm; a biblical term sometimes implying the inner Music.

See **Song**.